

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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Volume 2, No.332 © SS 2005 MIDEAST EDITION

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2005

## 30 American contractors injured in suicide bombing

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### Finding the bomb before it finds you

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VINCE LITTLE/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 13th Armor Regiment and the 70th Engineer Battalion found a roadside bomb near the Mushada Bridge in northern Baghdad on Monday and called in explosive ordnance disposal soldiers.



MATTHEW WESTER/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

From left to right: Army Staff Sgt. Vernon Smith, left, of Tallahassee, Fla., from the 766th Ordnance Company, is helped into a protective suit by Pfc. Wade Harrington, of Steinhatchee, Fla. Members of the EOD team maneuver a tracked robot toward the bomb. The bomb, a hollowed-out log filled with artillery wires, is detonated by troops. Minutes later, an unseen insurgent detonated a second bomb a few yards away as soldiers moved closer to inspect the initial detonation site.

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## News Tracker ... What's new with old news

### World

**Beef trade with Japan:** Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and President Bush spoke by telephone Wednesday to discuss ways to end Tokyo's 15-month ban on American beef, local media reported.

Kyodo News agency said Bush urged Koizumi to resume imports of U.S. beef, while Koizumi reiterated Tokyo's stance that it awaits a food safety panel's decision on whether to end the ban, which has been in place since December 2003.

The ban was imposed after the United States discovered its first case of fatal brain-wasting mad cow disease, formally known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, in a Holstein in Washington state.

**Croatia war crimes spat:** The chances of the European Union starting membership negotiations with Croatia next week were extremely slim Wednesday because several EU nations believe Zagreb has failed to fully cooperate with the international war crimes tribunal, diplomats said.

EU ambassadors will assess the issue on Thursday, but diplomats said there was widespread resistance to starting the negotiations on March 17 as originally planned.

EU officials said Chief U.N. prosecutor Carla Del Ponte wrote the 25 EU members last week, saying that Croatian war crimes suspect retired Gen. Ante Gotovina was within reach of Croatian authorities yet that they failed to arrest him.

**Nepal civil liberties:** Nepal's main royalist party urged King Gyanendra on Wednesday to lift curbs on political parties, release all detainees, and restore fundamental rights suspended since the monarch imposed emergency rule.

"The political parties and the fundamental rights are the basis of the constitutional monarchy," said Pashupati Shamsheer Rana, president of the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party. "All political detainees should be released and press freedom should be restored."

**British terrorism bill:** The British government, struggling to pass a sweeping new anti-terrorism law, announced Wednesday that it would make concessions in a bid to win the approval of legislators who threaten to block it.

In the past two days, the government has suffered crushing defeats in Parliament's upper chamber, the House of Lords, where peers threaten to derail the Prevention of Terrorism Bill. Critics of the legislation say it erodes fundamental civil liberties, including the right to a fair trial.

### States

**Trial for Fresno murders:** In graphic testimony that made some jurors recoil, the niece of a man charged with killing nine of his children described the sexual abuse she endured while living in his household.

Sofia Solario testified in Fresno, Calif., Tuesday that the abuse by Marcus Wesson escalated from touching to oral sex to intercourse. Wesson forced his nieces and daughters to perform sexual acts on him and on each other as he watched, according to testimony.

Wesson, 58, has been charged with murder and with several counts of sexual abuse of minors. He pleaded innocent to all counts.

**Radio station shooting:** In an effort to avert "rat snap" violence, the union that owns the building housing New York's hip hop station Hot 97 has demanded that visiting artists be accompanied by no more than one companion.

The New York District Council of Carpenters, the city's carpenters' union, also wants artists to notify WQHT-FM a week in advance who will be accompanying them, so



**Human smuggling murder trial:** Truck driver Tyrone Williams, left, is escorted by federal marshals into the federal courthouse in Houston on Tuesday for the start of his murder trial in the deaths of 19 illegal immigrants in 2003. Authorities say Williams, 34, a Jamaican citizen who lives in Schenectady, N.Y., was hired by a smuggling ring to transport more than 70 illegal immigrants in his hot, airless tractor-trailer. Witness Abelardo Flores, who admitted he had a long history of immigrant smuggling and cocaine use, testified Tuesday that Tyrone Williams had to know "something wasn't right. You open the doors if you care about the people."

security measures can be taken if necessary, the Daily News reported in Wednesday editions.

The move was sparked by a Feb. 28 shooting that took place in the lobby of the Hot 97 studios after rapper 50 Cent announced he was dropping former protégé The Game from his G-Unit clique.

**Yearbook gun-photo take:** A student's bid to appear with a shotgun on his shoulder in his high school yearbook portrait went to trial in Concord, N.H., on Tuesday with his lawyer trying to prove that administrators, not students, burned the pose.

In a preliminary decision last month, federal judge Steven McLaughlin ruled that student editors of the Londonderry High School yearbook made the decision. That weakened Blake Douglas's case that his freedom of expression was being violated, since student editors have their own First Amendment protections for editorial decisions.

**Cosby hit lawsuit:** A former Temple University employee filed suit Tuesday against comedian Bill Cosby in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, alleging that the actor sexually assaulted her in his Main Line mansion and then defamed her when the allegations became public.



Cosby

The civil suit filed by a Pickering, Ontario, woman seeks compensation for an alleged sexual assault in January 2004 and for defamation stemming from statements that Cosby and his agents made about her to various news outlets.

**Firing over milk experiment:** A high school teacher who staged a class experiment that encouraged students to drink milk until they vomited has lost another attempt to win his job back.

North Carolina Superior Court Judge E. Lynn Johnson ruled Monday that the Johnston County School Board had "sufficient cause" to fire Jeff Ferguson following his November 2003 experiment at Smithfield-Selma High School.

Thirty-eight honors chemistry students volunteered to participate in the milk-guzzling experiment, which Ferguson said was designed to test the body's ability to neutralize acids.

**Wright house sold:** A Frank Lloyd Wright house in Chicago that sat on the market for months was auctioned Tuesday for an undisclosed amount, a real estate company said.

The 1915 house had been on the market for several months and went unsold even as the asking price dropped from \$2.5 million to \$1.9 million. The owner then took the unusual step of putting the house on the auction block.

Frank Diliberto, senior vice president of Inland Real Estate Auction, would not divulge the sale price of the Prairie-style home, and those who attended the auction signed confidentiality agreements prohibiting them from disclosing it.

**Judge's family murders:** An attorney for jailed white supremacist Matthew Hale said Hale's mother asked him to relay an encoded message from Hale to one of his supporters. The New York Times reported Wednesday.

Hale, who awaits sentencing for soliciting the murder of a federal judge, has been a focus of the investigation into last week's shooting deaths of the judge's husband and mother.

Lawyer Glenn Greenwald said Hale's mother, Evelyn Hutchesson, asked him a few months ago to pass the message to a Hale supporter.

U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow found her 64-year-old husband, attorney Michael Lefkow, and 89-year-old mother, Donna Humphrey, shot to death in the basement of her Chicago home when she returned from work Feb. 28.

Stories and photos from wire services

# 30 American contractors hurt in suicide blast

## 3 killed; separate bombing kills GI

BY TODD PITMAN

The Associated Press

**BAGHDAD** — At least 30 American contractors were wounded Wednesday by a suicide bombing near a hotel in Baghdad.

Also in Baghdad, Iraqi officials said Wednesday that 41 bodies — some bullet-riddled, others beheaded — have been found at two sites, and they believe some of the corpses are Iraqi soldiers kidnapped and killed by insurgents.

In another attack, interim Planning Minister Mahdi al-Hafidh escaped assassination after gunmen opened fire on his convoy in Baghdad. One of his guards was killed and two others were wounded, police said.

A U.S. soldier was killed and another was injured Wednesday when a roadside bomb detonated as they were patrolling in the capital, the military said.

In the Baghdad suicide bombing, a garbage truck packed with explosives blew up outside the Agriculture Ministry and the Sadeer Hotel, which is used by Western contractors, killing at least three people, and wounding the 30 Americans, officials said. The bomber also died.

The U.S. Embassy said the 30 injured Americans were among 40 people hurt in the blast, but no Americans were killed, an Internet statement, al-Qaida in Iraq purportedly claimed responsibility for the attack on the Sadeer,



AP

An Iraqi soldier stands by the crater after a garbage truck exploded near a hotel used by Western contractors in Baghdad on Wednesday.

The blast shook buildings and covered the area with acrid black smoke, calling it the "hotel of the Jews."

The bombing shook nearby buildings in the heart of the capital, injuring dozens of people and sending up a huge column of acrid black smoke. Volleys of automatic weapons fire could be heard before and after the explosion.

Police said a group of insurgents wearing police uniforms first shot to death a guard at the Agriculture Ministry's gate, allowing the truck to enter a compound the ministry shares with the adjacent Sadeer hotel. Guards in the

area then fired on the vehicle, trying to disable it before it exploded.

Two other car bombings were also reported. Police 1st Lt. Mohammed al-Duleimi said one car bomber targeted an American checkpoint outside a base in Habaniyah, 50 miles west of Baghdad.

Another car bomb exploded near U.S. troops close to a U.S. base in Abu Ghraib, just west of the capital, police Lt. Akram al-Zubaidi said.

Late Tuesday, authorities found 26 corpses in a field near

The Associated Press

As of Tuesday, at least 1,509 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,149 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department.

The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Tuesday.

Since the start of U.S. military operations in Iraq, 11,285 U.S. servicemembers have been wounded, according to a Defense Department tally released Tuesday.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

- No deaths reported.
- The latest identifications reported by the military:
- Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael D. Jones, 43, Utah, Maine;

Rumana, a village about 12 miles east of the western city of Qaim, near the Syrian border, police Capt. Muzahim al-Karoubi and other officials said.

Each of the bodies had been riddled with bullets — apparently several days earlier. The bodies were found wearing civilian clothes and one of the dead was a woman, al-Karoubi said.

South of Baghdad in Latifiya,

died Thursday in Syracuse, N.Y., of a noncombat related illness after return from Iraq, assigned to the National Guard's 133rd Engineer Battalion, Belfast, Maine.

■ Army Spc. Adriana N. Salem, 21, Elk Grove Village, Ill.; died Friday in Remagen, Iraq, when her vehicle rolled over, assigned to the 3rd Forward Support Battalion, Division Support Command, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.

Killed Friday in Ramadi, Iraq, when an explosive detonated near their patrol, assigned to the 1st Infantry Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, Fort Carson, Colo., were the following:

- Army Capt. Sean Grimes, 31, Southfield, Mich.
- Army Sgt. 1st Class Donald W. Eacho, 38, Black Creek, Wis.
- Army Cpl. Stephen M. Moswan, 26, Newark, Del.
- Army Spc. Wade Michael Twyman, 27, Vista, Calif.

Iraqi troops on Tuesday found 15 headless bodies in a building inside an abandoned former army base, Defense Ministry Capt. Sabah Yassin said. The bodies included 10 men, three women and two children.

Yassin said some of the dead men in Latifiya were thought to have been part of a group of Iraqi soldiers who were kidnapped by insurgents in the area two weeks ago, Yassin said.

## Bulgaria: Lack of communication likely in death

**SOFIA, Bulgaria** — A lack of direct communication was the likely cause of last week's killing of a Bulgarian soldier by U.S. troops in Iraq, the Balkan country's top military official said Wednesday.

Private Gardi Gardev was the eighth Bulgarian to be killed in Iraq and his death has sparked anew the debate on the Balkan country's military presence there, turning it into a campaign issue ahead of general elections in June.

Army chief-of-staff Gen. Nikola Kolev said the two forces had not yet agreed on how to communicate with each other when Gardev was fatally shot near the Iraqi city of Diwaniya on Friday.

## Supplemental war funds request advances

**WASHINGTON** — President Bush's request for more than \$80 billion in emergency money for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan advanced, largely intact, through a House committee Tuesday.

The president would get much of what he asked for under the bill the House Appropriations Committee approved. Its overall cost is \$81.2 billion, about \$550 million lower than the president's proposal.

The House is expected to vote on the bill next week. The Senate isn't expected to produce its version until April.

The House bill would dedicate \$76.8 billion to war and reconstruction costs in Iraq and Afghanistan. That's \$1.8 billion more than the president wanted for defense-related expenses.

## Iraqi official hopes Saddam will be tried this year

**BAGHDAD** — Iraq's national security adviser said Tuesday he hoped the trial of Saddam Hussein would begin by the end of this year.

"I will be surprised if I do not see Saddam in the box before the end of the year," National Security Adviser Mouwafak al-Rubaie told reporters. "I am very much hopeful that Saddam will be in the box around September and October, before the general referendum."

Saddam was captured north of Baghdad in December 2003, and has been in custody with several of his top henchmen at a U.S.-guarded detention facility near Baghdad's international airport.

Saddam will be tried before the Iraqi Special Tribunal, which was established in late 2003.

The tribunal has given no official date for any of trials to begin.

From The Associated Press

# Slain agent's death 'painful to bear,' Italian premier says

BY ANGELA DOLAND

The Associated Press

**ROME** — The Italian intelligence agent killed by American forces in Iraq had U.S. military authorization for his operation to win the release of a hostage, Premier Silvio Berlusconi said Wednesday.

In his first major address since Friday's shooting strained relations between Washington and one of its biggest allies, Berlusconi told Italy's Senate that the car carrying agent Nicola Calipari and newly freed hostage Giuliana Sgrena stopped immediately when a car was flashed.

The U.S. military has said the Americans used hand and arm signals, flashed white lights and fired warning shots to try to get the car to stop.

The idea that Calipari was killed by friendly fire is "painful" to accept, Berlusconi said. But he reassured lawmakers: "The United States has no intention of evading the truth."

"I'm sure that in a very short time every aspect of this will be clarified," he said.

Berlusconi, a staunch support-

Nicola Calipari had U.S. military's approval for hostage rescue mission, Berlusconi says

er of President Bush and the U.S.-led campaign in Iraq, is struggling to balance his decision to keep 3,000 troops in the country against heavy anti-war sentiment among ordinary Italians.

His 10-minute address made no mention of ransom payments to win Sgrena's release. Some Italian officials have suggested a ransom was paid, but there has been no official confirmation.

Bush sent a letter to his Italian counterpart renewing his promise for a swift and thorough investigation into the killing, the Italian president's office said Wednesday.

Italy has called the shooting an "error," echoing the White House's characterization of the death, but has disputed the U.S. version of events and demanded that Washington shed light on the incident and punish those responsible.

"The case of friendly fire is certainly the most painful to bear. It feels like an injustice beyond any

sentiment. It's something unbearable," Berlusconi said.

"What Italian citizens have been victims of kidnappings, the government has always acted by following two directives: It has always rejected political blackmail, while at the same time activating all the political, diplomatic and intelligence channels to obtain the release of our nationals," he said.

Calipari was shot and killed Friday as he headed to Baghdad's airport after securing the release of Sgrena, who had been kidnapped on Feb. 4. Sgrena and another intelligence officer in the vehicle were wounded.

In his letter to Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, Bush called the shooting a "terrible tragedy" and expressed "our sympathy." Ciampi's office said in a statement.

"In his letter, President Bush assures President Ciampi that the United States will move toward a swift and exhaustive joint investigation" between Rome and Washington, the statement added.

# AF seeks volunteers for yearlong Iraq duty

BY LISA BURGESS  
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Air Force is seeking volunteers willing to spend a full year in Iraq to fill about 200 joint U.S. military jobs, most of them in Baghdad.

Although one-year tours are the norm for the Army, the positions are the first one-year rotations the Air Force has undertaken in Iraq.

Most Air Force deployments, which are managed under the service's Air Expeditionary Force, or AEF, cycles, are four months long — although some airmen with special skills that are in high demand, such as military police, can be deployed for six months.

U.S. Central Command officials asked

the Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John Jumper to extend some of its Iraq tours in order to provide "increased stability and continuity of operations" in certain positions, according to Saturday's Air Force message about the extensions.

The jobs are a mix of enlisted and officer billets. Many of the positions are intelligence analysts, according to an Air Force list of openings, although transportation, personnel, budget and other support specialists are also in demand.

Air Force officials will first ask airmen who are currently filling the billets as part of their four-month AEF rotation if they would be willing to spend an additional eight months in Iraq, according to Air Force spokeswoman Jennifer Stephens.

But "we're not going to make them stay,"

Stephens said in a Tuesday telephone interview.

Instead, the Air Force is seeking volunteers for the jobs, followed by an involuntary selection to fill remaining slots, Stephens said.

Both volunteer and nonvolunteer replacements for the airmen now posted in Baghdad will start their new jobs in July and August, Stephens said.

The rotations are not technically a "short tour" because the United States and Iraq have not signed a status of forces agreement, which normally covers permanent assignments, Stephens noted.

Instead, the one-year positions will fall under the category of "indeterminate length" temporary duty assignments, which allows the Air Force to offer entitle-

ments that are not available for standard temporary assignments, such as priority for follow-on assignments.

Air Force officials will also give airmen short-tour credit for the Iraq assignments, as well as exempting them from their normal AEF or other contingency deployments for six months following their return home.

The Air Force is also offering family members standard short-tour benefits, such as the possibility of moving to the airman's follow-on assignment location while their sponsor is in Iraq, Stephens said.

For more information on the Iraq one-year tours, contact your Air Force Personnel Flight, or go to: [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/procedures/ExtendedTOVs/extendedtovs.htm](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/procedures/ExtendedTOVs/extendedtovs.htm)  
E-mail Lisa Burgess at: [burgess@stripes.osd.mil](mailto:burgess@stripes.osd.mil)



MATTHEW WESTER/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Capt. Greg Spencer, right, of Scottsville, Ky., and Spc. Bladimir Joseph, from Long Island, N.Y., search through the wreckage of a previously exploded car bomb.



VINCE LITTLE/Stars and Stripes

U.S. soldiers secure a road Monday in northern Baghdad while a bomb is destroyed near the Mushada Bridge. The cordon area ensured soldiers and Iraqi civilians remained a safe distance from the controlled blast.



MATTHEW WESTER/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

An M1A1 tank secures a road while the roadside bomb is destroyed. Just after noon Monday, soldiers spotted the explosive, which was likely a decoy to lure troops near another two bombs.

## 'We've got to be right every time' in bomb search

BY VINCE LITTLE  
Stars and Stripes

In Iraq, it's rarely the bomb you see that will kill you.

A group of engineers and armor soldiers patrolling near Camp Taji, Iraq, on Monday proved how valuable a keen eye and healthy skepticism can be. Insurgents wanted the soldiers to find only one roadside bomb, but instead they found three planted in a deadly pattern.

Apparently, one of the devices was a decoy, designed to lure the 1st Armored Division soldiers into setting up a cordon of the area, which might have positioned them directly between the other two bombs, said Capt. Greg Spencer, 31, of Scottsville, Ky., commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 13th Armor Regiment. "We don't normally have three in one day like this, but these guys see this type of environment day in and day out," said Maj. Ajay Boston, the 1-13 operations officer.

"Fortunately, we find a lot more of them than they find of us. But the key is, we've got to be right every time. They've only got to be right once."

Three soldiers were killed and

eight others wounded Feb. 25 in Tarmiya, about 20 miles north of Baghdad and just outside Mushada, by a similar roadside bomb, in which explosives were tucked into a hollowed-out log. Army officials said.

In the past week, the 1-13 Armor Regiment, boosted by members of the 70th Engineer Battalion, have uncovered six roadside bombs and been hit by two. No soldiers have been hurt. The group is responsible for securing the road outside Taji — a primary supply route between Baghdad and Mosul — and protecting the convoys that use it, Spencer said. They took over that chore about 10 days ago following the departure of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Task Force.

Just after noon Monday, soldiers from the two units were moving toward the Mushada Bridge when Sgt. Joshua Jenkins and Sgt. Jonathan Wolford of the 70th Engineers spotted the first log.

"It had a wooden block underneath, keeping it from rolling down to the road," said Sgt. Ronny Myzore, 26, of the Marshall Islands, a combat engineer with the unit who was with the



VINCE LITTLE/Stars and Stripes

An explosive ordnance disposal team member and two engineers emerge from the dust after a second roadside bomb exploded Monday. The three soldiers, who were not injured, had moved in to investigate the site of a controlled detonation when the surprise blast occurred.

group. "We had to check it out. Sergeant Wolford went around behind it and saw two wires coming out. That's when we told everyone to run."

They called in the 766th Ordnance Company, air support and additional ground units to help seal off the area, blocking traffic in both directions.

Explosive ordnance disposal

soldiers maneuvered a small, wheeled robot down to the palm log and blew it up at about 1:30 p.m. Thirty minutes later, the second roadside bomb went off.

Army officials speculated it was radio-controlled, targeting the EOD team approaching the first bomb. Immediately after the second blast, armored Humvees and tanks rolled into the area,

searching for other logs and anyone who might have triggered the second blast. An Iraqi man, standing about 500 yards from the first explosion, suffered a minor cut to his leg from a piece of shrapnel. He was treated at the scene by an Army medic.

No suspects were taken into custody, officials said.

Familiarity with the terrain has led to the team's early success in sniffing out roadside bombs, Spencer added.

"It's definitely a dangerous environment these guys are dealing with," he said, "but they drive this road a lot. They can see things that are out of place, and it tips them off. They've become very adept at it. They can tell you about each crater or hole out there."

Spc. Kevin Brown, 21, of Dexter, Mo., an M113A3 armored personnel carrier driver for the 70th Engineers, said the battalion is constantly aware of its surroundings and generally suspicious of all roadside items.

"We're always thinking, 'Oh, that might be one,'" he said, referring to explosive devices. "We'd rather be safe than sorry, so we stop and check it out."

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# Commander reprimanded for Abu Ghraib

## Karpinski was in charge of Iraq prison during detainee abuse scandal

BY JON R. ANDERSON  
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — One of the top commanders implicated in the Abu Ghraib scandal has been quietly handed a letter of reprimand, according to Army and congressional sources.

Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, who led the 800th Military Police Brigade and the MPs who worked at Abu Ghraib, was issued the reprimand by Army vice chief of staff Gen. Dick Cody in recent weeks.

Karpinski was suspended from command duties after a series of high-level investigations accused her of sloppy leadership that contributed to problems of abuse at the infamous prison.

Karpinski's attorney declined to comment.

It was unclear if additional punishment would be meted out against Karpinski, said officials. "The real question now is whether there will be a relief for cause," said one Army official close to the case, referring to permanent loss of command responsibilities.

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Barbara Fast, whose role in the abuse as the chief of intel-

ligence in Iraq was questioned in some corners, has been exonerated of wrongdoing by Army investigators. Those findings are now being briefed to congressional leaders.

Fast was reassigned to Fort Huachuca, Ariz., several months ago. With the formal investigations now wrapping up, Army leaders plan to install Fast as the commander of intelligence training there soon. "The fact that she's there at all," said one Army official, "is a clear message that the Army leadership stands behind her."

There are no clear messages, however, being sent on the fate of Fast's boss in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez.

**'A certain reluctance'**

Sanchez led all coalition forces in Iraq for more than a year after taking over the reins of V Corps on June 14, 2003. Sanchez rejoined his staff in Heidelberg, Germany,

after handing off command duties in Iraq to Gen. George Casey on July 1.

With Sanchez's two-year tour as commander of V Corps ending in a few months, it remains unclear what will happen to the Army's top military official implicated in the scandal.

"No final decision will be made until the Army investigation is complete," said one senior Defense Department official of Sanchez's fate, but added "there is a certain reluctance to put him through another round of hearings again."

Sanchez was grilled by congressional leaders in the wake of the scandal and would have to appear before the Senate again for confirmation to any new three- or four-star assignment. Unless nominated and approved for another assignment, Sanchez would be forced to retire. Through a spokesman in Germany, Sanchez declined to comment.

Another investigation is due out this week.

### Full reckoning

Vice Adm. Albert Church is expected to brief congressional leaders on his findings Thursday.

Church, the Navy's Inspector General, was ordered by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to provide a broad-based review of all the investigations into detainee operations and address areas not covered by those reports.

Army investigations into the culpability of specific leaders are wrapping up as well.

And while Church was not directly tasked with addressing the question of leadership accountability, the topic is sure to be raised in the hearings.

"The accountability question is critical and continues to be," said one senior Senate staffer. Indeed, senators on both sides of the aisle — led by John McCain, R-Ariz., and Jack Reed, D-R.I. — have demanded a full reckoning for senior leaders and have raised eyebrows at the fact that, so far, only junior enlisted soldiers have faced formal charges from the military.

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# U.S. brings Afghan boy to Indiana for heart surgery

BY JEANINE IBRAHIM  
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — A 15-month-old Afghan boy was breathing on his own Wednesday following surgery to repair a life-threatening heart defect that had been diagnosed by a U.S. military doctor working in a refugee camp.

Surgeons at the Riley Hospital for Children operated on Qudrat Wardak for about six hours Tuesday to move the reversed main blood vessels in his heart into their proper place.

Dr. Mark Turrentine said Tuesday he was pleased and thankful to see Qudrat doing so well after the high-risk operation. The boy was listed in serious but stable condition Wednesday.

"He's doing rather well," hospital spokesman Jon Mills said. The first 24 to 48 hours after surgery are the most critical as doctors must monitor Qudrat to ensure that his heart is functioning properly, Turrentine said.

"Once he's taking formula and we know he's doing well on his own, he could be released," said Dr. Robert Darrah, a pediatric cardiologist.

The U.S. military flew Qudrat and his father from Afghanistan nearly two weeks ago for the surgery after an Indiana National Guard doctor diagnosed the heart problem during an exam at the camp in the Afghan capital, Kabul.

After Qudrat is discharged, he will need further monitoring for a couple of weeks and then be able to go home to Afghanistan, where he most likely would not need any medication or medical assistance, Darrah said.

Qudrat's condition is called transposition of the great arteries, in which the aorta and pulmonary artery carry reversed, sending oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the lungs and oxygen-poor blood into the rest of the body.

The boy, who at 13 pounds weighs about as much



Fifteen-month-old Qudrat Wardak, of Afghanistan, is carried Tuesday by his father, Hakimul Wardak, 32, in Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

Surgeons operated on the reversed blood vessels in Qudrat's heart. The U.S. military flew the boy and his father to the States after an Indiana National Guard doctor diagnosed the child's heart problem.

as a typical 5-month-old, also suffers from other heart problems, which combine to restrict his blood flow and stunt his development, Riley doctors have said.

Qudrat's father, Hakimul Wardak, 32, was exhausted after staying up all night Monday with his son and then Tuesday morning carrying him into the operating room.

"He's very overwhelmed and happy after he saw his son in the operating room and doctors told him how super Qudrat was feeling," Wardak's interpreter said.

The surgeons were donating their time to help the boy, and the local Rotary Club is covering other costs.

Doctors at Riley who examined Qudrat after he arrived Feb. 25 found his condition was more serious than first thought, and the surgery had to be postponed while he was treated for respiratory and eye infections.

# Report: Australian, U.S. soldiers charged after gun found in bag

The Associated Press

ISTANBUL, Turkey — A U.S. soldier and an Australian soldier who crossed into Turkey from neighboring Iraq could face up to three years in prison after a gun was allegedly found in the American's luggage as the two tried to board a flight in Turkey, a news agency reported Wednesday.

A court in the city of Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey, charged Christopher Franz Pipes and Ross Milosevic of Australia with carrying firearms without a license, after a gun, which was in

several pieces, was found in the American's luggage at the city's airport, the Anatolia news agency reported.

The two had crossed into Turkey from Iraq and were boarding a flight from Diyarbakir to Istanbul, Anatolia said.

The two were freed pending the trial, the agency said. The charges carry a penalty of between one and three years in prison.

The U.S. Embassy could not confirm the report. An Australian Embassy official said he could not comment, citing privacy laws.

### NBC corrects report about assassinated judge

NEW YORK — NBC News twice issued corrections for an erroneous "Nightly News" report that the chief judge for Saddam Hussein's trial had been assassinated.

NBC led its evening newscast with a report Tuesday that Raid Juhli, the chief administrative judge seen in Saddam's July court appearance, had been killed. Actually, it was another judge involved in the trial, Barwzee Mahmood, who had been killed.

Tuesday's initial report was seen on several East Coast broadcasts, but had been corrected by the time later feeds were made available in the Midwest and West, NBC said.

Anchor Brian Williams corrected the record on all feeds Wednesday: "At that time U.S. sources believed the victim was the presiding judge in the Saddam case. We later learned and reported it was, in fact, a member of the Saddam tribunal."

Later, correspondent Tom Aspell explained the initial report was based on interviews with multiple U.S. officials, who blamed erroneous reports out of Baghdad.

"The story was wrong and we corrected it as quickly as possible," said NBC News spokeswoman Barbara Levin.

From The Associated Press

# At Ramstein, a load of work and more ahead

## Busy AF squadron to see increase in cargo traffic when Rhein-Main closes

BY SCOTT SCHONAUER

Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — With the push of the button, the pallet gently rolls down the track and through a sliding door.

The cargo disappears into a four-story warehouse, where a large crane automatically hoists the pallet and moves it to the right spot in the steady hand of a librarian sliding a book onto the top shelf.

The robotic rolling crane and warehouse, called the Mechanized Material Handling System, is a critical piece of machinery that helps the 723rd Air Mobility Squadron move thousands of pounds of cargo.

The automated system is the centerpiece to what the squadron does, but the 723rd commander, Col. Jeffrey Derrick, is quick to credit the unit's roughly 750 people for making things go relatively smoothly.

"The people make it work," Derrick

said.

The squadron moves more cargo than any other Air Force squadron in Europe and the pace is only expected to quicken with the closure of Rhein-Main Air Base by the end of the year.

The amount of cargo the unit has moved has doubled since 2001 and the additional number of passengers coming through the U.S. military's main transportation hub in Europe will make things even busier.

Much of the cargo going through Ramstein heads to places such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Iraq.

"It never slows down here," said Master Sgt. Brian McDaniel, the squadron's noncommissioned officer in charge of special handling.

Airmen are already working long days, but they could get longer as the Air Force gradually shutters

Rhein-Main.

The heavy workload will fall upon people such as Senior Airman Brian Tate, who keeps track of the hulking cargo planes.



PHOTOS BY SCOTT SCHONAUER/Stars and Stripes

Airman Zach Fuchs helps load a pallet onto a forklift Wednesday at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. The 723rd Air Mobility Squadron transports more cargo than any other air base squadron in Europe and expects to take on more when Rhein-Main Air Base closes this year.

But he is unfazed by the prospect of busier days ahead.

"I grew up on a farm," said Tate, who is from Tuscaloosa, Ala. "This is cake."

How well the squadron will be able to handle additional cargo and passengers depends largely on construction upgrades to the ramp and the passenger terminal. If those projects are delayed, it could be a greater challenge.

Right now, the base has enough room for 14 to 15 large cargo aircraft. But after construction is complete by the end of this year, there will be room for more than two dozen aircraft, such as C-5s and C-17s.

Maj. Leigh Method, the squadron's aerial port flight commander, said the most difficult part of taking on more cargo and peo-

ple is that they really won't know how it will work until the day Rhein-Main closes later this year.

The robotic crane and warehouse that arrived on base last year is the U.S. military's largest, fully automated cargo handling system and will help the squadron carry the load. The warehouse can store more than 450 pallets at a time and the crane can do the job in a fraction of the time of manually driven forklifts.

The question is whether airmen can take on the extra work.

Squadron members are optimistic. "There isn't a single person [with the squadron] who doesn't understand the importance of the mission," Method said.

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Air Force Staff Sgt. Dan Baird steadies a pallet onto his forklift at Ramstein Air Base.

# Athlete creates fund for kids who lost parent in war

BY MARK PRATT

The Associated Press

BOSTON — Peter Trovato keeps the list of names above the computer in his Amherst apartment.

Ashley, Marcus, Matthew, Katie — and more than a dozen others — are a reminder of why he spends so much effort helping people he doesn't know, and in many cases has never met, while balancing a demanding academic schedule and the commitment of being a Division I college hockey player.

Trovato is the founder of the Massachusetts Soldiers Legacy Fund, a charitable endowment that aims to provide college scholarship money to the children of Bay State military personnel who have died in Iraq or Afghanistan. The money is in addition to any educational benefits they already get from the state and federal governments.

At least 30 Massachusetts residents have died so far in the war on terrorism, leaving behind more than 20 children, from infants to teens, whose names he sees each day.

"I get tired, I just look up there at the list and it keeps me going," said Trovato, a senior at the University of Massachusetts.

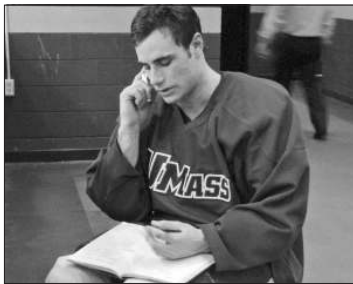
Each name is a reminder of a family torn apart, of another child who will never see a parent again, and in at least one case, a child who will never even meet his father.

Trovato is one of five finalists for the Hockey Humanitarian Award, presented annually by a private foundation to "college hockey's finest citizen." Any collegiate hockey player in any NCAA division is eligible for the award, which will be presented April 8 during the men's Frozen Four in Columbus, Ohio.

Trovato got the idea for the fund last summer while working as a legislative intern for state Rep. Michael F. Rush, D-Boston. One of his jobs was to keep the lawmaker abreast of the news. "I kept reading about these Massachusetts soldiers who had given their lives in either Iraq or Afghanistan, leaving behind wives and children, and I was like, 'What can I do?'" Trovato said.

But setting up a charitable foundation is not easy. It involves lawyers and accountants and advisers and the Internal Revenue Service.

With advice from Rob Itale, the chief executive of Granite Telecommunications, the Quincy company where Trovato also interned



Peter Trovato talks on the phone outside a practice hockey rink at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst last month. Trovato has established a charity to help children of soldiers killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

last summer, and legal help from Beverly attorney David Fissette, the fund got its IRS taxpayer's ID number on Dec. 1, which allowed it to start raising money.

Trovato had a full plate before starting the soldiers fund. He has

a 3.6 grade point average with a double major in political science and journalism in the university's Commonwealth College honors program. Playing hockey at the Division I level also means three-hour practices during the

season and long road trips that this season have taken Trovato from Anchorage, Alaska to Orono, Maine.

He also tutors at-risk high school students, as well as his own teammates; he volunteers at a Northampton homeless shelter with other members of the team; and he is a Big Brother.

And, he notes with a chuckle, he has a girlfriend and a dog who deserve his attention as well.

"It's a tough balancing act, I'm not going to lie," he said.

Helping the families of soldiers is important to Trovato, because he almost became a soldier himself. He was accepted to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. "I didn't go to West Point because I wasn't totally committed, and I think you have to be," he said.

Trovato is not sure what he will do for work upon graduation, but he knows the soldiers fund will keep him occupied for years.

"After I'm done at UMass, this is going to go on, probably for the rest of my life," he said. "One day I hope I can go to a high school graduation for one of these kids knowing that they are going to college and I had something to do with that."

## Airman's wife arrested

SAN ANGELO, Texas — Authorities have arrested the wife of a Dyess Air Force Base airman who was found dead in a West Texas stock tank, accusing her of tampering with evidence.

Staff Sgt. Michael Leslie Severance's body was found on Sunday in a tank on a ranch located 15 miles northeast of San Angelo. The 24-year-old's death was ruled a homicide.

His wife, Wendi Davidson, was being held on \$50,000 bail on Tuesday in the Tom Green County Jail. If convicted of the third-degree felony, she would face up to 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

An affidavit filed by the Texas Rangers said Davidson's brother told investigators that his sister said she had found Severance dead in bed and dumped his body in the tank.

An agent with the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations followed Davidson to the ranch a week before divers found the body, according to the affidavit.

Severance's family said they

told investigators that Davidson gave them conflicting reports about her husband's disappearance.

She reported him missing Jan. 15.

## NCO dies in training

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. — An airman from Eglin Air Force Base collapsed and died while attending training at this Florida Panhandle installation.

Tech. Sgt. James Smith, 38, suffered a seizure Monday at Tyndall's alterations shop where cardiopulmonary resuscitation immediately was performed, Air Force officials said Tuesday.

Smith, who was attending Non-commissioned Officers Academy, was taken to Bay Medical Center in Panama City where he was pronounced dead. The cause of death remained under investigation, officials said in a news release.

Smith, of Atlanta, served about 20 years in the Air Force and had been selected for promotion to master sergeant.

It is the fifth sudden death of servicemen at Panhandle bases during the past year.

From The Associated Press

# Air Force's Blue to Green program off to slow start

BY LEO SHANE III

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Only about 60 airmen have taken advantage of the Operation Blue to Green program in its first seven months, Air Force said Wednesday.

The program, launched to help reduce the 17,000 extra airmen in the service last fall while helping the Army with its manning shortfall, offers bonuses to Air Force troops to transfer into high-demand specialties with the Army.

Gen. John Jumper, Air Force chief of staff, said other retirement and relocation programs have been much more successful. The force is still about 7,000 airmen over its end-strength goal, but Jumper said he expects to reach that reduced level by June 1.

Air Force officials have done essentially no recruiting over the last five months and will welcome in about 18,000 new airmen this year — about 15,000 fewer than a typical recruiting class.

Meanwhile, Army recruiters missed their

monthly recruiting goal in February, the first time they've come up short in almost five years. Officials blamed the problem on public concerns about the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Under Blue to Green, most airmen who opt for transfer could retain their grade and rank. Sailors also are being sought under the program.

Jumper's statements came as members of the House Appropriations Committee reviewed quality of life issues for airmen. Several representatives expressed concern about the costs associated with the higher-than-expected level of personnel.

At one point last year the force had more than 24,000 extra airmen, but Jumper said the demands of Operation Noble Eagle and the global war on terrorism have "kept them all busy."

About 2,600 airmen are currently assisting Army units in Iraq with convoy services, mostly driving vehicles, Jumper said.

The general said he has dismissed suggestions of simply discharging servicemembers to reduce force numbers because of the potential damage such a move could do to morale.

E-mail Leo Shane at: shane@stripes.osd.mil

# Veterans protest VA budget plans at committee hearing

BY LEO SHANE III

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of disabled veterans booted and jeered Republican House members on Tuesday for their budget proposal for veterans' health care, which critics call inadequate to deal with the future needs of current troops.

Following testimony before a pair of congressional committees by officials from the Disabled American Veterans, or DAV, the crowd of more than 400 wounded and disabled veterans cheered House members who criticized the president's budget plans and heckled representatives who defended the spending.

The loudest heckling was reserved for House Veterans' Affairs chairman Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., who was criticized by Democrats on the committee and rebuked the crowd at one point by saying "where the river is the shallowest, it makes the most noise."

The proposed 2006 budget includes a 1.1 percent increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which officials from the DAV called too little to deal with the large number of servicemembers expected to return from Iraq and Afghanistan with missing limbs, mental illnesses and other service injuries.

In addition, the budget would require veterans without combat injuries and who make more than \$25,000 a year to pay a \$250 enrollment fee to use department health services.

James Suresly, national commander of the DAV, which calls itself the voice of service-connected disabled veterans, said he wants to see an additional \$3.4 billion added to the budget for veterans' medical care, and see the new fees removed.



JEFF SCHRADE/Special to Stars and Stripes

From left, Rep. Steve Buyer, Sen. Larry Craig and Rep. Jeff Miller listen to testimony on the budget for veterans affairs programs during the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee hearing in Washington on Tuesday. Wounded servicemembers and their advocates decry what they say is insufficient funding for medical care.

But Republicans on the committee have already forwarded their budget proposals to House officials, and they include an enrollment fee and only slight funding increases.

Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., called Buyer and his supporters hypocrites for scheduling Tuesday's hearing without any intention of considering the veterans' budget concerns.

"This budget is an insult to our troops and to you," he told the crowd, who responded with a standing ovation. "This is unconscionable."

Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Fla., called promises made by Republicans "frankly a lot of (expletive)," and was quickly censured by Buyer as the crowd roared in approval.

Buyer said the committee is fo-

cused on making sure the poorest and most severely injured veterans continue to receive free medical care, and said many affluent, unimpaired veterans can currently exploit the low-cost health care system. If changes are not made, the quality of care could suffer, he said.

Army Sgt. Tyler Hall, a 24-year-old Alaskan who lost part of his left leg in an improvised explosive device blast in August, said he attended Tuesday's hearing to learn more about the legislative process and see how he can help other soldiers like himself.

"The number of disabled vets is growing, so this affects us quite a bit," he said. "You almost automatically go into the VA hospitals, so we need to make sure the care is there."

E-mail Leo Shane at: shane@stripes.osd.mil

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## IN THE STATES

## Clinton put surgery on hold to tour South Asia

BY KAREN MATTHEWS  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former President Clinton set out on a tour of tsunami-ravaged countries last month knowing he needed more surgery on his chest. But his doctors had given him the go-ahead, assuring him that this operation — to fix a lung problem caused by his heart bypass — could wait.

Clinton returns to the hospital Thursday, almost six months exactly after having heart bypass surgery, to have fluid buildup and scar tissue removed from his chest.

The condition was discovered during a recent X-ray.

The operation, known as a decortication, is described by his doctors at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center as low-risk.

They will remove scar tissue that is pressing down on his left lung either through a small incision or with a video-assisted thorascopic inserted between his ribs.

In an interview with Associated Press Television News, Clinton said he knew he would be having surgery to repair the condition before he left with former President George H.W. Bush on the tsunami visit. He scheduled the operation for later because doctors told him he would not be able to fly after the surgery.

Clinton, 58, passed a full physical before going to Asia and scored in the 95th percentile for his age in a stress test, said Dr. Allan Schwartz, chief of cardiology at New York-Presbyterian.

On Tuesday, Clinton went to the Oval Office with the elder Bush to brief President Bush on their tour of South Asian countries that suffered heavy losses.

"I feel fine. I just had a little fluid buildup after my surgery," Clinton told AP. "It's no big deal."

He was planning to play with Bush on Wednesday afternoon in a charity golf outing in Hobe Sound, Fla., organized by Greg Norman for tsunami relief.

Clinton's wife, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, said she would be in New York for the surgery and was "very confident about the outcome."



Clinton

## Accuser's brother contradicts self in Jackson trial

BY TIM MOLLOY  
The Associated Press

SANTA MARIA, Calif. — The brother of Michael Jackson's accuser was hammered by more cross-examination Wednesday, and said key points in his testimony contradicted an earlier account because "I was nervous when I did the interview."

The 14-year-old boy testified this week that he twice saw his sleeping brother being molested by Jackson, both times by walking upstairs into Jackson's bedroom at the singer's Neverland ranch.

Defense attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. produced an interview the boy gave to sheriff's deputies in which he said he was lying on a couch pretending to be asleep when he witnessed the second molestation.

"I was pretending like I was sleeping. I was in his couch, the little couch," Mesereau quoted from a transcript.

Mesereau asked the boy questions about whether his account of the second molestation had changed.

"It was actually three times," the boy said.

Mesereau also asked him about what exactly Jackson was doing to his brother in the second incident and how he was touching him.

"I was nervous when I did the interview," the boy said.

"So because you were nervous you didn't get the facts right," the attorney asked.

"Yes," the boy said.

On Tuesday, Mesereau produced a transcript of grand jury testimony by a psychologist who interviewed the 14-year-old boy and reported yet another description of the second molestation with fundamentally different physical details.

The cross-examination of the accuser's brother began on Tuesday, when Mesereau got the boy to acknowledge that Jackson had not really shown him or his brother a particular sex magazine.



AP

Michael Jackson gives a thumbs-up to supporters Tuesday as he arrives at the Santa Barbara County Courthouse in Santa Maria, Calif..

The boy appeared caught by surprise when Mesereau confronted him with his testimony from Monday that Jackson showed him and his brother an issue of a magazine called Barely Legal, which was displayed by District Attorney Tom Sneddon as a significant piece of evidence seized from Jackson's home.

The boy reiterated he was sure it was the exact magazine Jackson showed them in a suitcase full of magazines.

Jackson, 46, is accused of molesting a 13-year-old cancer survi-

vor at Neverland in 2003, giving him alcohol and conspiring to hold the boy's family captive to get them to rebut a damaging TV documentary in which Jackson said he ordered children to sleep in his bedroom.

Jackson's defense contends the family has a history of filing false claims to get money.

On Tuesday, the brother said under cross-examination that he lied under oath in a deposition for another case when he swore that his mother and father never fought and that his father never hit him.

A plume of ash from Mount St. Helens is released Tuesday in Washington. A 30-minute outpouring began without warning, about an hour after an earthquake hit the east side of the volcano.

AP



## Mount St. Helens releases ash plume

The Associated Press

VANCOUVER, Wash. — Mount St. Helens appeared to be settling down early Wednesday after a startling blast that shot gritty volcanic ash to about 36,000 feet above sea level.

A fine dusting was reported as far away as 125 miles to the east-northeast in southern Grant County by the time ashfall stopped late Tuesday night, the National Weather Service reported. An ashfall advisory for some areas east of the Cascade Range was canceled at midnight.

"It looks like it's gone back to roughly the same type of (earthquake) signal that we were seeing before," University of Washington seismologist Steve Malone told The Seattle Times late Tuesday.

Scientists said it was the most powerful blast from Mt. St. Helens since the latest round of volcanic activity began last fall.

The 30-minute outpouring began with practically no warning around 5:25 p.m. Tuesday, about an hour after a 2.0 magni-

tude quake on the east side of the 8,364-foot volcano, the most active in the 48 contiguous states, said Bill Steele, coordinator of the Pacific Northwest Seismograph Network at the university in Seattle.

In the preceding hours there had been a subtle increase in quake activity, Malone said.

Seismologists said the blast explosion destroyed three sensors in the crater but instruments around the rim of the crater remained intact.

Scientists said the explosion did not appear to indicate a higher risk of a more dangerous blast, noting that high levels of the kind of gases that often signal an eruption had not been detected in recent flights over the crater.

"We don't expect another explosion," said Peggy Johnson, a seismologist at the lab.

Geologists have said there is little chance of anything like the massive explosion that removed the top 1,243 feet of the mountain on May 18, 1980, killing 57 people and covering the region with gritty ash.

## Northeast hit by cold blast

BY GREG SUKNIENIK  
The Associated Press

BOSTON — Whipping wind, plunging temperatures and a coating of snow and ice caused power outages and whitout conditions, ending the Northeast's brief flirtation with spring.

The storm dumped as much as 10 inches of snow at Rutland, west of Boston, the National Weather Service said Wednesday. Six inches of snow accumulated in East Hartford, Conn., and northern New Jersey's Blairstown Township reported 4 inches.

Logan International Airport closed shortly after 8 p.m. Tuesday because of whitout conditions in blowing snow, but reopened one of its runways early Wednesday, Massachusetts Port Authority spokesman Phil Orlandella said. Hundreds of passengers were stranded at the airport overnight.

Massachusetts utilities reported about 22,000 homes and businesses lost power during the storm Tuesday, with fewer than 3,000 still blacked out Wednesday.

The storm had largely blown out of New England by Wednesday, with snow lingering only in northern Maine, but temperatures were as low as 2 above zero at Pittsfield, Mass., with wind chills well below zero.

Little warming is forecast through the end of the week, and the National Weather Service forecast a chance of more snow across the Northeast on Friday.

The storm system battered much of the East on Tuesday, from the snow and ice in New England to vicious thunderstorms in North Carolina.

The thunderstorms in North Carolina toppled trees and damaged buildings. At least 85,000 utility customers lost power.



# Mayor, councilman win spots in L.A. runoff vote

BY MICHAEL R. BLOOD

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Incumbent James Hahn and a Hispanic city councilman won slots in the May runoff for mayor after the third-place candidate conceded defeat Wednesday.

"I called Mayor Hahn this morning and congratulated him on his victory," Bob Hertzberg said during a morning news conference.

Nearly 24,000 absentee and other ballots remained to be counted, but Hertzberg trailed second-place Hahn by 5,800 votes, a margin his campaign concluded was too great.

The decision puts Hahn in a May 17 runoff with Antonio Villaraigosa, who is within striking distance of becoming the first Hispanic to win City Hall in more than a century. It also gives him a chance to avenge his 2001 runoff loss to Hahn.

Hahn is in danger of losing his job despite a drop in crime and a growing economy.

In 2001, Villaraigosa, a high school dropout who went on to become speaker of the California Assembly, was also the top vote-getter in the primary, but he lost the runoff to Hahn, 53 percent to 46 percent.

With 99 percent of precincts reporting early Wednesday, Villaraigosa led with 124,561 votes, or 33 percent.

The mayor tallied 89,189 votes, or 24 percent. But put him 5,800 votes ahead of Hertzberg, who had 83,420 votes, to get more.

Villaraigosa would have had to do more

than 50 percent to win the primary outright, but his winning margin secured him a slot in the runoff for the second time in four years.

"I.A. is ready, and we're ready," Villaraigosa told cheering supporters at a Hollywood club Tuesday night.

Election officials blamed the weather for unusually slow returns. Evening live coverage forced organizers to abandon plans to use two helicopters to ferry returns to the city's downtown election center.

Hahn, whose family has been active in Los Angeles politics since the 1940s, has been beset by corruption allegations at City Hall and his own drag image in the most star-studded city in America.

No Los Angeles mayor has been ousted from office in more than 30 years.

Villaraigosa, 52, grew up in a broken home on the city's heavily Hispanic Eastside. His up-from-the-barrio story defines his political image — the son of a Mexican immigrant who rose from a gritty neighborhood to the halls of power in Sacramento and Los Angeles.

Known for his ease in crowds and quick smile, Villaraigosa has openly questioned Hahn's honesty and argued that the nation's second-largest city can't move forward without a change of direction at City Hall.

Also on the ballot and running fourth was Councilman Bernard Parks, the black former police chief who was ousted with Hahn's blessing and had been expected to siphon off some of the Latino support that was key to Hahn's victory four years ago.



Los Angeles mayoral candidate Antonio Villaraigosa speaks Tuesday at his election night celebration party in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles. Villaraigosa earned a spot in a May runoff vote where he likely will face incumbent Mayor James Hahn.

## Matsui to take husband's spot in U.S. House

The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Sounding themes familiar from her late husband's 14 campaigns, Doris Matsui, 60, handily won a special election to fill her term and will become the newest member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

With all precincts reporting Tuesday, Matsui had nearly 72 percent of the overall vote and 88 percent among Democrats in a race marked by low turnout. She is expected to be sworn in Thursday.

Matsui, a lobbyist and former Clinton White House official, completed what her television ads called a "uniquely Sacramento story." Succeeding her husband, the late U.S. Rep. Robert Matsui, she becomes the nation's 45th congressional widow since 1923 to assume the seat of her spouse.

"It feels bittersweet, but my heart is full of hope and promise," said Matsui, minutes after giving a victory speech.

Robert Matsui, who represented the Sacramento-area 5th Congressional District for 26 years, died Jan. 1 at Bethesda Naval Hospital of complications from a rare bone marrow disease. He was 63.

## Infrastructure lacking

WASHINGTON — Crowded schools, traffic-choked roads and transit cutbacks are eroding the quality of American life, according to an analysis by city engineers that gave the nation's infrastructure an overall grade of D.

A report by the American Society of Civil Engineers released Wednesday assessed the four-year trend in the condition of 12 categories of infrastructure, including roadways, bridges, drinking water systems, public parks, railroads and the power grid.

The overall grade slipped from the D-plus given to the infrastructure in 2001 and 2003.

"Americans are spending more time stuck in traffic and less time at home with their families," William Henry, the group's president, said in a statement.

The report said \$1.6 trillion should be spent over the next five years to alleviate potential problems with the nation's infrastructure. Transportation alone requires \$94 billion in annual spending, the report said.

From The Associated Press

# N.Y. performs of homeless street count

## Volunteers canvas city to deduce population, offer ride to a shelter

BY SAM DOLNICK

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Phillips Taylor headed into the city's dark streets early Tuesday to look for homeless people sleeping in the same doorways and alleys she called home a decade ago.

One of 2,000 volunteers who canvassed five boroughs for the first citywide homeless street count, she came across a man sleeping in a cardboard box near Union Square.

"It brings back a lot of memories," said Taylor, 46.

Like Taylor, the volunteers searched for people sleeping beneath Manhattan's skyscrapers, as well as those bedding down underneath highway overpasses in suburban parts of Queens and Staten Island.

Officials estimate there are 36,000 people sleeping in New York's homeless shelters, but what they want to know is how many never make it into the shelters.

City officials will use the infor-

mation to create the most complete portrait ever compiled of New York's street homeless population, said Linda Gibbs, the city's Homeless Services commissioner.

"Up to this point there's been no accurate count," Gibbs said. "We want to understand more about who they are and where they are."

Taylor's neck bears a gruesome clue why some bypass the shelters. She has an eight-inch scar from being stabbed and robbed of \$2.50 during her first and last night at a city shelter, she said. She's gone on to work toward a master's degree in social work at Hunter College.

Most of the homeless people Taylor and her team met declined help, some quietly, others with more force.

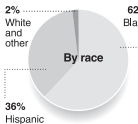
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development this year recommended that cities around the country count their homeless.

Volunteers were trained to approach people they meet, ask if they are homeless and offer them rides to shelters.

## More living in New York City shelters

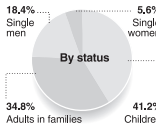
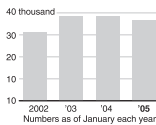
The city sent 2,000 volunteers to all five boroughs Monday night for the first-ever citywide population survey of the homeless. About 36,000 people sleep in New York homeless shelters each night.

### NYC homeless shelter population



SOURCE: Coalition for the Homeless

### Population of NYC shelters



AP

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Kathleen Munger, of Holliston, Mass., smokes a cigarette outside a restaurant, in Providence, R.I., in early March. Researchers are optimistic about finding a drug that will help people stop smoking.

AP



## Quit smoking with a pill?

Researchers working on drugs to cut nicotine dependency

BY MATT APUZZO  
The Associated Press

GROTON, Conn. — Researchers are racing to develop a potentially lucrative drug that would make smoking as treatable as erectile dysfunction, high cholesterol and acid reflux disease.

Major pharmaceutical companies and small startups see the potential for billions of dollars in sales for a vaccine or a nicotine-free pill that could end addiction at the chemical level for America's 50 million smokers.

"It's the biggest addiction market there is," said Dr. Herbert D. Kleber, a psychiatry professor and addiction researcher at Columbia University. "Is it realistic to be able to help addicts stop smoking and remain off with a pill? I think the answer is yes and we're working on a number of them."

While nicotine patches, gums, lozenges and sprays help wean smokers off cigarettes by slowly reducing their dependence on nicotine, researchers are tailoring drugs to mimic or block nicotine's chemical reactions with the body.

In Connecticut, researchers at Pfizer Inc. identified a brain receptor that nicotine binds to and designed a drug, varenicline, that latches to the same site. Varenicline is in Phase III testing, normally the last step before a company applies for approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

Researchers hope that the drug will attach to nicotine receptors in the brain, preventing overpower-

ing cravings from setting in when someone stops smoking.

If varenicline's claims hold up, the drug could generate more than \$500 million a year in sales, said David Moskowitz, an analyst with Friedman, Billings, Ramsey & Co.

"It's an unmet medical need," said Dr. Karen Reeves, executive director of clinical development for Pfizer. "The morbidity and mortality rate is so high, and doctors and smokers really have not had enough in their armamentarium to help smokers stop smoking."

Then there's NicVax, a drug that Florida-based Nabil Pharmaceuticals claims could be used as a nicotine vaccine. NicVax triggers the production of antibodies that bind to nicotine molecules, preventing them from reacting with receptors in the brain.

"Everyone has been looking for the magic bullet," said Thomas Glynn, director of cancer science and trends for the American Cancer Society.

Whether one will find remains uncertain, he said. It's more likely, doctors agree, that scientists will develop a number of successful drugs that will prove effective, but no single pill will "cure" smoking.

Doctors with high hopes have been let down before. In 1997, the FDA approved bupropion, commonly sold under the name Zyban, as an anti-smoking drug. The drug, which was originally marketed as an antidepressant, has proved successful for some smokers but was never the industry blockbuster some expected.

## Cholesterol drugs in high doses help cut heart problems

BY MARILYN MARCHIONE  
The Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Giving people with modestly clogged arteries very high doses of a drug to drive their cholesterol down to very low levels cut their risk of strokes and heart attacks even more impressively than expected, the first study to test this strategy found.

Although some patients developed liver problems that forced them to stop taking the medication, researchers believe the benefits of this approach outweigh its risks. Still, specialists said more study is needed to establish its safety before it can be recommended.

"This was a very gutsy study," said Dr. John LaRossa of State University of New York in Brooklyn, who led the large international study. "This is new territory."

He presented the findings Tuesday at an American College of Cardiology meeting in Orlando, who also were published online by the New England Journal of Medicine and will be in its April 7 issue.

Statins drugs such as Lipitor, Zocor and Mevacor have shown an impressive ability to lower LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, and reduce the risk of heart trouble. Recently, some doctors have advocated a much more aggressive strategy of driving cholesterol levels down even farther for certain people.

A study of this approach was funded by and involved many doctors with ties to Pfizer Inc., which makes Lipitor. It is one of six statins on the market. Guidelines advise people at high risk of a heart attack to get LDL to 70 and those at moderate risk to aim for 100.

A previous study found that giving high-dose statins to lower cholesterol better 100 helped people who recently suffered a heart attack. This study, in contrast, involved people who had clogged

### High-dose statins further reduce risks

High doses of the statin drug atorvastatin to reduce cholesterol can decrease the risk of strokes and heart attacks. Major cardiac events were 22 percent lower among those on high-dose statins, though some developed liver inflammation.

### Major cardiac events after nearly five years

Low dose 10.9%  
High dose 8.7%

### Patients showing adverse effects related to treatment

Low dose 5.8%  
High dose 8.1%

NOTE: Low dose 10 mg.; high 80 mg.

SOURCE: New England Journal of Medicine

heart attacks that occasionally cause chest pain but were in no immediate danger of a heart attack. Up to 13 million Americans are in that category.

About 10,000 people in 14 countries took either 10 milligrams or 80 milligrams of Lipitor and brought their LDL levels to 101 and 77, respectively.

After nearly five years, 10.9 percent of those on the low dose had died or suffered a stroke, heart attack or other big problem, compared with 8.7 percent on the high dose. That means that patients on high doses had a 22 percent lower risk.

That is better than doctors had expected, LaRossa said.

"Most of us thought that when you got to 100, going lower would be marginal at best," he said.

However, about 1.2 percent developed signs of liver inflammation on the high dose versus 0.2 percent of the others, which is in line with other studies that tested high doses of statins.

## Study: Many children run behind on shots schedule

BY LINDSEY TANNER  
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — While overall U.S. immunization rates are high, many toddlers get their recommended shots several months or more late — delays that have probably contributed to some illnesses and deaths, a government study suggests.

By age 2, 37 percent of youngsters got at least one recommended vaccination more than six months late, researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found. About 20 percent of children had similar delays for four or more vaccinations.

Timely vaccinations are "one of the most important things parents can do to protect the health of their child," said CDC epidemiologist Elizabeth Luman.

About 20 shots to prevent more than a dozen diseases are recommended for children in their first two years of life.

The study appears in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association. The researchers did not examine reasons for the delays.

The researchers analyzed data from a national telephone survey of families of 14,819 children ages 2 years to 35 months.

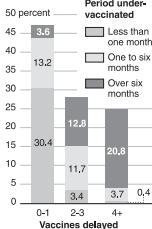
Participants were asked in 2003 about vaccinations their children had received by age 2. A survey was mailed to participants' doctors to verify the information.

By the time of the survey, 74 percent of the children were up to date on their immunizations, but many had gotten their shots late.

Among the most common delayed shots were those for pertussis, or whooping cough.

### Late vaccinations

By age 2, 37 percent of U.S. youngsters received at least one recommended vaccination more than six months late. About 20 percent of children had similar delays for four or more vaccinations.



SOURCE: Journal of the American Medical Association

### Obesity pill confirmed

ORLANDO, Fla. — A second study confirms that an experimental diet pill can help people lose weight and keep it off for up to two years, setting the stage for its maker to seek approval to sell it in the United States.

The drug, rimonabant, which the French company Sanofi-Aventis SA hopes to sell under the brand name Acomplia, trimmed nearly 16 pounds on average from people taking the optimal dose for two years, compared with 5.5 pounds for those who took dummy pills, doctors reported.

"The majority of the weight that was lost at one year is still maintained after two years. There is only a slight increase over that second year," said Dr. Luc Van Gaet of University Hospital in Antwerp, Belgium, who led the company-funded study involving 1,507 severely obese people in Europe.

About two-thirds of American adults are overweight or obese; in European countries, one-third to half are. Diet drugs sold now are in for short-term use or have unpleasant side effects that make it tough to stay on them.

From The Associated Press

## IN THE WORLD

# Syrian soldiers start pullback

## Lawmakers push Lebanon president to re-nominate former prime minister

By BASSEM MROUE

The Associated Press

MDEIREJ, Lebanon — Syrian soldiers flashed victory signs and waved automatic rifles as they drove east through Lebanon's mountains Wednesday in the first phase of a pullback, as government lawmakers advised the Lebanese president to bring back his pro-Syrian prime minister forced to resign by opposition protests.

Re-nominating Omar Karami as prime minister would be sure to enrage the opposition, which is demanding the creation of a government clean of Syrian domination. But Damascus is eager to keep its hold on the Lebanese leadership as it pulls its forces back to the Bekaa Valley, near the Syrian border, and negotiates with the government in Beirut on the troops' full removal.

In the mountains north and east of Beirut, Syrian soldiers

were moving out in trucks from bases they have held for almost three decades, and — in some instances — Lebanese troops were taking their place.

The Syrians waved at watching journalists as they loaded supplies, packed up their personal belongings and drove east. One helmeted soldier riding in the back of one truck looked backward down the road, chewing and spitting watermelon seeds.

In Damascus, tens of thousands of people took over the main streets, singing national songs and proclaiming their loyalty to President Bashar Assad. One banner addressed to the president read: "We are all with you, who makes the right decisions."

The rally came a day after Syria's allies in Lebanon made a thundering show of their strength, with hundreds of thousands turning out for a protest organized by the Shiite Muslim Hezbollah guer-



Syrian President Bashar Assad waves from the balcony of his presidential palace to greet a huge crowd that marched through Damascus on Wednesday to show support for Assad.

rilla group to express pressure from the United States, France and the United Nations.

Lebanese President Emile Lahoud was consulting with lawmakers Wednesday on who to name as prime minister. Karami was forced to resign on Feb. 28.

Associated Press writer Joseph Panosian contributed to this report from Beirut.

# Experts suggest new U.N. agency to fight terrorism financing

The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — Financial experts urged world leaders Wednesday to create a new international institution under U.N. auspices to study ways in which terrorists raise money.

The draft recommendation, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, and experts attending a terrorism conference in Madrid said that some measures have been undertaken to curb terrorist financing, but not enough to cut the flow of funds to al-Qaida and other international movements.

"Terrorist financing has not been recognized as a priority in the fight against terrorism," said Loretta Napoleoni, an expert on terrorist financing. "It would be much more efficient if we blocked the money. And we haven't done that."

World leaders and experts attending the four-day summit here on democracy, terrorism and security are grappling with ways to combat violence without jeopardizing human rights. But fighting terrorism — particularly its fi-

nancing — is complicated, in part because terrorists get money using legitimate business as well as by kidnapping, drug dealing and credit card fraud.

"We don't have a clear image of how the money of terrorists moves around," said Petre Roman, the former prime minister of Romania.

Former French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin stressed that international cooperation must take place within "the rule of law and respecting civil rights because they are the soul of democracy."

Jospin, Roman and former Colombian President Andres Pastrana said the issue of combating the terrorists' financing network will be included in the draft recommendations of the four-day conference of leading terrorism experts from 50 countries and about two dozen world leaders in Madrid.

The finance working group experts suggested that in addition to the creation of an independent finance center under U.N. auspices, a judicial review process should be put into place to put anti-terror measures within a legal framework.



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## OPINION

## No longer business as usual in Arab world

The Chicago Tribune

When on Earth were to be known as the last foe of freedom? Not Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who last Thursday joined a chorus of leaders telling Syrian President Bashar Assad to end his nation's three-decade occupation of Lebanon.

Not Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who abruptly announced plans to hold the first free, multiparty election in his country's history.

Not President Mahmoud Abbas, whose path to Palestinian independence is now blocked less by Israel than by peace-averse militant groups such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

And certainly not the brave peoples of Afghanistan, of Georgia, of Ukraine, of Iraq, who have raised loud their voices for freedom, often at peril to their lives. Each day, new tremors signal populist demands in lands where freedom has not thrived. This is, then, one of those explosive moments when history is written not in books, but screaming headlines.

Now it is Lebanon's turn, with citizens by the millions heralding a "cedar revolution." Is it possible that Iran, with its repressive and unpopular mullahs, could be next? And in seclusive Syria, who today would buy Assad voters? That, of course, is the dilemma dictators face in these moments of tumult: When history lurches, where will it next land? For that matter, why does it lurk? Why is this happening now?

The prophet pro tem of the world's spreading freedom movement is Walid Jumblatt, the influential patriarch of Druze Muslims in Lebanon. He has long been a critic of the United States and Israel. But of late has been a thorn to the occupying Syrians.

Since he spoke to a Washington Post columnist on Feb. 23, his assessment — heresy to many listeners — has resonated around the globe: "It's strange for me to say it, but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq. I was cynical about Iraq. But when I saw the Iraqi people voting three weeks ago, 8 million of them, it was the start of a new Arab world. The Syrian people, the Egyptian people, all say that something is changing. The Berlin Wall has fallen. We can see it."

On the same evening Jumblatt spoke, a hitherto unthinkable headline — it too, continues to ripple around the world — erupted on the Web site of the German newsmagazine Der Spiegel: "Could George W. Bush be right?"

Beneath that radical thought, writer Lance Christian Malzahar likened Bush's then pending visit to Germany to President Ronald Reagan standing before the Brandenburg Gate in 1987: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

In January, setting the tone of his second term, Bush had told reporters: "I believe democracy can take hold in parts of the world that have been condemned to tyranny. And I believe when democracies take hold, it leads to peace."

The response in Der Spiegel: "Bush's idea of a Middle Eastern democracy imported at the tip of a bayonet is, for (German liberals), the hysterical offspring of the American neo-cons. Even German conservatives find the idea that Arabic countries could transform themselves into enlightened democracies somewhat absurd. Europeans today — just like the Europeans of 1987 — cannot imagine that the world might change. ... We Europeans always want to have the world from outside, whereas the Americans strive for the world of tomorrow."



In a follow-up article, Der Spiegel asked, "How quickly can the virus of democracy spread?"

That is the question for other despots as they contemplate the likely fate of Saddam Hussein. They're trapped in their own spider holes. No longer can they survive solely by stoking public hatred of the Great Satan. As citizens who witness democracy in neighboring Iraq and upheaval in Lebanon ask, "Why not us?" the enemy of the tyrant becomes more so much the United States, but the aspirations of his own people.

No movement has only one catalyst: Pales-

tinians, for example, needed to be free of Yasser Arafat before independence could emerge as an option. But Washington's muscular diplomacy unarguably is playing a crucial role throughout the Mideast. For one repressive regime after another, the sight of American soldiers at long last enforcing United Nations resolutions — and bestowing democracy on a subjugated people — surely must concentrate the mind.

History written in headlines can reverse course just as fast. We are long way from knowing whether the still unfinished liberation of Iraq helps transform a troubled region. But for the foes of freedom, the Mideast must feel like a suddenly playful place.

## Bush's designs on veterans benefits fail inspection

Weapons America needs to defend itself in the future will have to be slashed. Incentives for young people to join the uniformed military are in jeopardy even as U.S. forces are being strained in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And it's all the fault of military veterans and even their widows. That's what David Chu, the Pentagon's undersecretary for personnel and readiness, says about increases in veterans' benefits that Congress approved since 1999.

"The amounts have gotten to the point where they are hurtful. They are taking away from the nation's ability to defend itself," Chu told The Wall Street Journal recently.

Chu's remarks became the Pentagon's shot heard around the blogosphere. Vets aren't going down without a fight. The Pentagon estimates increases in benefits, some approved by Congress during the Clinton administration, will cost \$100 billion more in the next six years. But those funds are that? Those benefits were promised long ago. Then the government tried to wiggle out of its obligation. After veterans groups, a powerful voting bloc, forced the issue, both Republicans and Democrats came to the rescue — despite the Bush administration's attempts to nickel-and-dime vets.

You don't take on the Greatest Generation without paying a political price. But President Bush, having won a second term to office with strong support from veterans, has nothing to lose. Forget veterans benefits —

Bush's priority remains tax cuts. He wants tax cuts that disproportionately help the richest Americans, reasoning they will create more jobs and strengthen the economy.

Except too many of those jobs are going to India, China and so forth. Not just grunt work, but technical jobs, too, that pay well.

Thomas H. Corey, national president of Vietnam Veterans of America, fired his own volley back at the Bush administration after it released the latest veterans budget proposal, which would require that certain veterans pay more for their health care. "The president is mistaken if he believes that 38 percent of veterans voted for the Bush-Cheney ticket last year to give his administration a mandate to cut funds for veterans," Corey said. "If he believes that veterans voted to restrict access to health care, he needs to reassess his position."

He, tell that to the Swift Boat boys who sought to besmirch Sen. John Kerry's military service during the presidential campaign.

Several veterans groups, including the Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, the Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars have put together their own budget proposal. They figure the Department of Veterans Affairs needs \$31.2 billion for medical care.

The administration is proposing \$27.8 billion — a less than one-half percent increase. Adjusted for inflation, Bush's plan amounts to a cut.

Bush wants to increase vets' medical-insurance enrollment to \$250 a year, raise prescription copayments and restrict certain care. This would drive 213,000 vets, many already on tight retirement budgets, away

from the VA medical system, the veterans groups estimate.

Long-term care would be gutted under the Bush plan, too, serving 27 percent fewer vets in 2006 than in 1998.

Pitting military retirees and vets against those who are serving today is a sideshow that hides the main event — the true reasons for the federal budget crunch. Exploding annual deficits have more to do with Bush's penchant for over-the-top tax cuts than long-overdue benefits for those who risked their lives to defend this country during two world wars, Korea, Vietnam, and all the other military operations to this day. Veterans' benefits don't deserve to be on the chopping block.

Myriam Marquez is an editorial page columnist for The Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel.

## Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



A man attends to a child who was a victim of food poisoning in Mabini, Philippines, on Wednesday. At least 27 elementary school children died and another 100 were hospitalized after eating a snack during morning recess Wednesday, officials said.

AP



## School tragedy: 27 children dead

BY PAUL ALEXANDER

The Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — At least 27 elementary school children died and another 100 were hospitalized after eating a snack during morning recess Wednesday in the southern Philippines, officials said.

Francisca Doliente said her 9-year-old niece Arve Tamor was given some of the deep-fried caramelized cassava by a classmate who bought it from a regular vendor outside the San Jose school.

"Her friend is gone. She died," Doliente said, adding that her niece was undergoing treatment.

The roots of the cassava plant, a major crop in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world, are rich in protein, minerals

and vitamins A, B and C. However, it is poisonous without proper preparation. If cassava is eaten raw, the human digestive system will convert part of it into cyanide. Even two cassava roots contain a fatal dose.

"Some said they took only two bites because it tasted bitter and the effects were felt 5-10 minutes later," said Dr. Harold Gallego of Garcia Memorial Provincial Hospital in the nearby town of Talibon, where 47 patients were taken.

The victims suffered severe stomach pain, then vomiting and diarrhea. They were taken to at least four hospitals near the school in Mabini, a town on Bohol Island, about 380 miles southeast of Manila.

Mabini Mayor Stephen Rances said 27 students were confirmed dead. Treatment was delayed because the nearest hospital was 20 miles away.

Television footage showed sobbing parents carrying blanket-wrapped bodies from hospitals.

Some victims were still vomiting nearly 12 hours after eating the snack, said Dr. Nenita Po, chief of the hospital at the government-run Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital. However, those who reached the hospital had good chances of surviving, Po said, adding that some parents, worried their children ate some cassava, brought them in even if they did not show symptoms.

Dr. Po said of one's those brought there was the 68-year-old woman who prepared the food with another woman. Two girls, ages 7 and 8, were brought in with, both died.

A specimen of the cassava was taken for analysis at the local Crime Laboratory Group.

## Investigator questions remarks

HAMBURG, Germany — A U.S. investigator of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks cast doubt Wednesday on statements made by a key al-Qaida suspect to U.S. authorities, including one presented as potentially exonerating evidence at the retrial of an accused aide of the suicide pilot.

Dietrich Snell, a New York prosecutor who helped write the U.S. 9/11 Commission report to Congress last year, said "there's a questionability" about statements by Ramzi Binalshibh. In a key statement that U.S. authorities provided to the Hamburg state court, Binalshibh indicated defendant Moumar al Motassadeq had nothing to do with the plot.

But Snell questioned Binalshibh's assertion, noting that he said at one point that Zacarias Moussawi — the only U.S. defendant charged in the Sept. 11 attacks — had been on standby in case one of the other hijackers pulled out.

Snell also cited what he said were contradictory statements by Binalshibh on whether al-Qaida had considered attacking a U.S. nuclear power plant and on details of a meeting with lead hijacker Mohamed Atta in Spain shortly before the attacks.

## Sudan needs \$7.8B for recovery

NAIROBI, Kenya — Sudan needs some \$7.8 billion over the next 2½ years for emergency reconstruction now that a 21-year civil war in the south has ended, government officials and rebel rebels said in a joint appeal Wednesday.

The money will finance a recovery and development program for southern and northern Sudan. The plan, however, does not cover the troubled Darfur region of western Sudan, where a campaign of violence by pro-government militia fighting rebels has forced an estimated 2 million people to flee their homes.

Darfur needs another \$2 billion a year for operations to secure the region and meet its humanitarian needs, said Isac Diwan, the World Bank country director for Sudan and Ethiopia.

Sudan's government and southern rebels signed a peace agreement on Jan. 9 to end Africa's longest-running civil war.

## Al-Qaida wanted to kidnap Crowe?

SYDNEY, Australia — Russell Crowe says Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network wanted to kidnap him as part of "a cultural destabilization plot," according to an Australian magazine.

In an interview published in the March edition of Australia's Q magazine, Crowe said FBI agents told him of the threat in 2001, in the months before he won a best actor Oscar for his role as Maximus in "Gladiator."

"That was the first time I'd ever heard the phrase 'al-Qaida,'" Crowe said. "It was about — and here's another little touch of irony — taking iconographic Americans out of the picture as sort of a cultural destabilization plot," he said.

Crowe said he was shadowed by FBI agents after the threat and hired private security guards.

## Group demands citizens' release

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — An international human rights group has called on Pakistan to immediately charge or release two American brothers allegedly picked up last year by intelligence agents for links to Islamic militants.

New York-based Human Rights Watch also demanded that the U.S. government clarify its involvement in the case in a press release Tuesday. It said the men were taken in Pakistan as guerrilla fighters with Hezbollah or elsewhere.

The brothers — both U.S. citizens of Pakistani origin and identified as Zain Afzal, 23, and Kashan Afzal, 25, — are known to be "Islamist sympathizers" who trained in Pakistan as guerrilla fighters with Hezbollah or elsewhere, a Muslim militant group, the rights group said.

Sara Zain, the wife of Afzal, said Wednesday that she has tried for months to find out where her husband was being held, but he is not even alive, but has come up empty.

Interior Minister Afab Khan Sherpao did not have information about the brothers or the Human Rights Watch statement.

Greg Crouch, a spokesman at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, said he could not comment on the case due to "Privacy Act considerations."

From The Associated Press

## Tsunami warning system to be set by '06

The Associated Press

PARIS — Experts from the United Nations and Indian Ocean countries agreed to set up a tsunami warning system to prevent a repeat of the catastrophe that struck on Dec. 26, UNESCO said Tuesday.

A fully functioning system that detects undersea earthquakes and broadcasts warnings to coastal communities is expected to be in place by the end of 2006, said Patricia Bernal, executive secretary of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

At a five-day meeting at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, experts also laid out a timetable for the project and interim measures to help protect the region.

Japan and the United States are to begin providing alerts on seismic activity to the region starting April 1. The two countries have the world's most advanced tsunami warning systems, and a U.N.-coordinated network based in Ewa Beach, Hawaii, issues alerts for 26 Pacific Ocean nations. Tidal gauges will be installed at six sites.



Aslan Maskhadov, then newly elected president of Chechnya, in 1997. Chechen rebel leader Maskhadov has been killed, a spokesman for Russian forces said Tuesday. Col. Ilya Shabalin said Maskhadov was killed during the course of a "special operation."

AP

## Chechen rebels vow to fight on

The Associated Press

MOSCOW — Chechen rebels vowed Wednesday to carry on their separatist fight against Russia despite the death of their leader Aslan Maskhadov after special forces cornered him in an underground bunker in northern Chechnya.

Russian legislators hailed Maskhadov's killing as a sign that Russia was on the right track in its anti-terrorist campaign, as they call the fight against Islamic militants in Chechnya and neighboring regions.

Russia's Federal Security Service chief

announced Tuesday that Maskhadov had been killed in a special operation in the town of Tolstoy-Yurt. Russian television stations broadcast footage of a shirtless, gray-bearded corpse, and the rebel leader's envoy in London, Akhmed Zakayev, confirmed the 53-year-old guerrilla commander's death.

The ITAR-Tass news agency later cited the military commandant for Chechnya, Lt. Gen. Grigory Fomenko, as saying the body had been formally identified as Maskhadov.

But Chechen rebels vowed to continue fighting.

# Prince Charles' albatross

## Royal wears feathered cloak 3 days after plea to save birds

BY RAY LILLEY  
The Associated Press

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Britain's Prince Charles wore a cloak made out of albatross feathers Wednesday, three days after he made an impassioned plea to save the massive birds from extinction.

The crown prince appeared unaware that the garment was made of albatross feathers when it was draped over his shoulders while visiting a Maori weaving exhibition in Auckland. No birds were killed to make the Maori cloak — the feathers were gathered from a nesting colony, said weaver Ini Morunga.

Adding to the cloak's exotic qualities were feathers from two other birds: the flightless native weka and the pukeko, or swamp hen. But neither are endangered, and the feathers were plucked from birds run over by vehicles.

"They are from roadkill," said Kelly Walker, another weaver who'd worked on the cloak.

Saving the albatross — a bird Charles called the "great ocean traveler" — was high on the prince's agenda when he visited one of their nesting colonies near the southern city of Dunedin on Sunday, squatting next to an albatross rearing a fluffy white chick.

While there, the prince, a staunch conservationist, wondered aloud if it would take a "dodo-like disappearance of this noble winged creature" to awaken people to the threat to the seabirds, which fly vast distances around the world.

The prince said the birds' survival was threatened by long-line fishing and other poor marine harvesting practices.

Speaking on Wednesday at a civic reception in the northern city of Auckland, the prince won warm applause when he said the albatross was "now a sym-



Prince Charles is presented with a traditional Maori cloak at a weaving exhibit at the Auckland War Memorial Museum in New Zealand on Wednesday.

bol of the way in which we manage, or mismanage, the entire marine environment."

A spokesman for the prince said later that no bird had been harmed in making the cloak, and that Charles had returned it to its weavers after wearing it "in a ceremonial way" during the visit.

## Woman, 104, to stay

MELBOURNE, Australia — A 104-year-old Chinese woman will not be deported from Australia despite immigration officials' decision to refuse her a permanent visa, the Australian government announced Wednesday.

Cui Yu Hu arrived in the southern city of Melbourne to visit her family in 1995 on a 12-month tourist visa, but no airline would return her to China because she was too old and frail.

The widow remained in Australia illegally for another four years before applying for an aged parent visa that would allow her to stay permanently and receive free health care. But under the rules by which the department decides such applications, Hu is ineligible because she overstayed her initial 12-month visa.

## Hong Kong Disneyland

HONG KONG — The Hong Kong Disneyland theme park set to open in September has already booked 10,000 room reservations for its hotel since it opened a customer call center three weeks ago, officials said Wednesday.

"It really took us by surprise, the volume of calls coming in," said Bill Ernest, managing director of operations at Hong Kong Disneyland.

Ernest said Hong Kong residents have made most of the 10,000 reservations at the park's 1,000-room hotel, though the park expects that about 40 percent of the visitors will eventually come from mainland China.

The park, scheduled to open Sept. 12 as a joint venture between the Hong Kong government and The Walt Disney Co., is being built on reclaimed land at Penny's Bay on Hong Kong's outlying Lantau island.

## Malaysian space food

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — When the first Malaysian astronaut goes into space they will be able to wear batik and dine on home grown food such as roti, nasi, shrimp curry and milky tea.

Russia is expected to send Malaysia's first astronaut into space as part of a scientific mission on board the International Space Station. Two Russian scientists will arrive here this month to help select candidates for the program, National Space Agency director-general Mazlan Othman told reporters Tuesday.

## Thai police lose rights

BANGKOK, Thailand — Motorists in the Thai capital are having the last laugh: More than 600 police officers have temporarily lost the right to issue tickets after failing a test on traffic law.

The police department last month tested 4,475 officers on their knowledge of traffic law, and almost one in seven failed to show adequate knowledge, said Maj. Gen. Montree Jamroon, a deputy commander of the Metropolitan Police Bureau.

From The Associated Press

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## Early detection

**HI** HONOLULU — Researchers using a sophisticated sensor aboard an aircraft flying at the edge of space were able to spot an invasive tree species starting to take over native forests near the Big Island's Kilauea Volcano, according to a study.

The sensing instrument pinpointed where Myrica faya trees, originally from the Canary Islands and the Azores, are starting to take over native ohia trees in and around Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

Previous studies located the Myrica trees, but mostly after they had proliferated, scientists said. The study indicates the remote sensor can spot infestations at their very beginning stages when there is still a chance of controlling them.

## Seeking CEO's salary

**MA** BOSTON — The family of a dog electrocuted when it stepped on an electrical hot spot along a sidewalk has demanded a payment from NSTar Electric of \$740,000, the amount the utility's chief executive earns annually, or it will sue, an attorney said.

"We tried to come up with an offer that had some poetry to it, and that would say in very clear terms to NSTar: 'We don't want this to keep happening,'" said John G. Swamley, the family's lawyer.

Swamley said that after three dog deaths in Boston since 2000 blamed on so-called stray voltage, the family wants a sufficiently harsh financial sanction to force the utility to solve the problem.

NStar, which has taken full responsibility for the incident, offered \$200,000, which the family said it turned down.

## Drop-out rates drop

**TX** SAN ANTONIO — More than a third of Texas high school freshmen are failing to obtain a high school diploma in four years, according to a study.

The Intercultural Development Research Association study found that 36 percent of Texas students who entered high school in 2000 weren't around to graduate in May 2004.

That rate, known as the attrition rate, decreased slightly from last year's 38 percent. The attrition rate was 39 percent in 2001-02. The association's first report, for 1985-86, found a rate of 35 percent. It rose to a high of 43 percent in 1996-97 before leveling off.

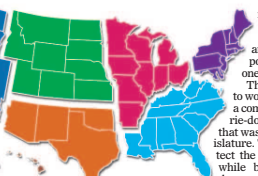
Minority and male students made up the majority of those who did not graduate on time last year.

## Conviction reinstated

**AR** LITTLE ROCK — A man freed of a 30-year sentence for rape will have to serve that sentence after all, a federal appeals court says.

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals at St. Louis overturned a 2004 ruling by U.S. Magistrate Jerry Cavaneau that threw out one of eight felony convictions against Stephen Anthony Sera of Irving, Texas.

Sera was convicted in 1998 of seducing and then sexually assaulting women while he videotaped the encounters. Cavaneau ruled that a videotape used as evidence during Sera's trial on the rape



## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

charge should not have been used and was prejudicial, because it actually showed an incident from a different night.

Cavaneau's ruling let the seven other counts stand, leaving Sera to serve the next-longest sentence of 15 years for attempted rape.

The appeals court ruling reinstated the rape conviction and 30-year sentence.

## Restoring the trails

**PA** ALLENTOWN — Restoration of overgrown hiking trails, camping outings and nature studies this summer will mark the start of a five-year program of improvements at Lehigh County's Trexler Game Preserve, officials said.

County Executive Jane R. Ervin, members of the Harry C. Trexler Trust and other officials outlined details of this year's work, which will cost an estimated \$24,500.

The county and trust intend to spend \$2.75 million through 2009 on improvements designed to open the 1,100-acre park to greater public use.

## Bill targets prairie dogs

**SD** PIERRE — Gov. Mike Rounds has signed a bill giving South Dakota ranchers some extra ammunition in dealing with prairie dogs that invade from neighboring private property.

The measure will conditionally reinstate prairie dogs on a state list of pests and allow for local control



## Water boy

Chase Barnes, 1, gets wet as he attempts to water flowers and grass around his family's home in Albany, Ore.

methods in certain circumstances. If that is done, county weed and pest boards could poison prairie dogs in one-mile buffer zones.

The new law is intended to work in conjunction with a comprehensive state prairie-dog management plan that was approved by the Legislature. The plan seeks to protect the rights of landowners while balancing the prairie dog population to prevent black-tailed prairie dogs from being listed as an endangered species.

## Nut growers head south

**FL** CHUMUCKLA — Santa Rosa County peanuts have won such a reputation for hardness across the Southeast that farmers sell much of their harvest as seed. Now, the growers are looking south to Central America for new markets.

County Commissioner Don Salter and members of the county's economic development agency will participate in a four-day Florida trade mission to Panama to promote various products produced in the state.

"The opportunity is there," Salter said. "It's well known that Central America continues to open its borders to free trade."

## Prosecuted for piracy

**AZ** PHOENIX — An Arizona university student is believed to be the first person in the world to be convicted of a crime under state laws for illegally downloading music and movies from the Internet, prosecutors and activists say.

University of Arizona student Parvin Dhalwal pleaded guilty to possession of counterfeit marks, or unauthorized copies of intellectual property.

Under an agreement with prosecutors, Dhalwal was sentenced to a three-month deferred jail sentence, three years of probation, 200 hours of community service and a \$5,400 fine. The judge in the case also ordered him to take a copyright class at the University of Arizona, which he attends, and to avoid file-sharing computer programs.

## Not bad for a dime

**MD** BALTIMORE — A dime struck in 1894 at the San Francisco mint was auctioned for \$1,322,500 — the most ever paid for a United States dime, experts said.

The winning bidder took part in the sale by phone and was not identified.

The coin, described as being in nearly pristine condition, was one of only 24 dimes made that year at the San Francisco mint, whose director had requested them as gifts for visiting bankers.

## Recruits skip mental test

**SC** CHARLESTON — The head of the state Criminal Justice Academy says he's concerned South Carolina has dropped a program that gave aspiring police officers a psychological evaluation.

Budget cuts prompted elimination of the tests, which state law doesn't require. Academy director William Neill says not every prospective officer has the maturity and mental stability to handle the job.



## My, what beautiful claws

Spikey, a standard poodle, Labrador retriever and American pit bull mix, has his nails trimmed by pet groomer Myra Macias in El Paso, Texas. Macias recently won several top prizes including a best in show and best in class at the Groom and Kennel Expo in Burbank, Calif.



## A moving moment

Jessie and Alfred Caserona sit in lawn chairs as they watch the home of former Kansas governor Alf Landon be moved off its original lot on West Maple Street in Independence, Kan., to another lot on South Eighth to make room for a new Walgreens.





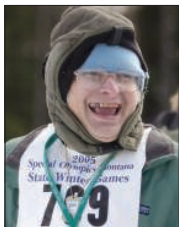
## It must be March

Temperatures in the high 50s, snow and short sleeves make an odd combination but also make for outdoor fun for St. Mary's School fifth-graders as they climb, slide and toss snowballs on a snowbank in the school parking lot in Canandaigua, N.Y.



## Dig those clams

Commercial crabber Allen Heckard enjoys a day off from his boat digging for razor clams in Long Beach, Wash. The razor clam season lasts only three days.



## A special Olympian

Dan Craver of Kalispell, Mont., smiles broadly after finishing a snowshoe race during the Special Olympics Montana 2005 Winter Games at Big Mountain in Whitefish, Mont.



## Easy rider

Milo, a rat terrier, checks out the view while being chauffeured through Cameron Park in Waco, Texas, by his owner Craig Row, who took advantage of the sunny day.

## Dorm precautions

**WY** CHEYENNE — Fire sprinkler systems will be installed at all Wyoming college residence halls. A dormitory fire at Northwest College a year ago was the impetus for the retrofit, authorized under a supplemental budget bill signed into law by Gov. Dave Freudenthal. No one was seriously hurt last March in the blaze, which caused \$5.8 million in damage.

## Alleged counterfeit

**CA** SAN JOSE — A federal grand jury has indicted three people for allegedly using counterfeit credit cards to ring up millions of dollars in fraudulent purchases in the United States and Canada between 1998 and 2001.

The case "may be one of the largest counterfeit credit card rings ever discovered in North America," said Paul Morrissey, special agent in charge of the Secret Service's San Francisco field office.

Prosecutors said the suspects stole credit card numbers and used the accounts to make purchases in San Francisco, New York, Philadelphia and Seattle, and the Canadian cities of Calgary and Vancouver between 1998 and 2001.

Raids in Oakland, Calif., and Vancouver turned up thousands of phony cards and equipment needed to make them, authorities said.

## Something fishy here

**AZ** TUCSON — A controlled flood meant to aid fish in the Grand Canyon may have had the opposite effect.

Researchers hoped the 90-hour release of water in November from the Glen Canyon Dam would redistribute sediment to create beaches, plant-rooting soil, and backwaters and pools to help fish breed.

But scientists studying the effects of the flood announced they found 63 percent fewer of an endangered minnow called a humpback chub than before the flooding. They are not sure why.

The fish caught after the flooding tended to be somewhat larger than fish examined before the flood, suggesting that the smallest fish declined most significantly, said Lew Coggins, a fisheries biologist.

## Determined employee

**FL** WESTON — Her car made a spectacular crash into an alligator-infested canal and she couldn't swim, but Ana Maria Amaya still got to work on time.

Amaya's car clipped another vehicle on Alligator Alley, the highway connecting Fort Lauderdale and Florida's Gulf Coast, and went airborne, police said. She landed in the roadside canal and began sinking as other motorists stopped and called 911.

Although she can't swim, Amaya, 32, climbed out and headed to dry ground — after stopping and returning to the car to retrieve her immigration papers in her purse. One witness reported seeing two alligators near the car.

Instead of taking the day off, Amaya got a ride a few hours later to the restaurant where she works, arriving on time.

## Cheaters never prosper

**MA** BOSTON — Harvard Business School will reject 119 applicants who hacked into the

school's admission site to see if they had been accepted, the school's dean Kim Clark said.

"This behavior is unethical at best — a serious breach of trust that cannot be countered by rationalization," Clark said.

Systems at about six business schools were hacked into after someone posted instructions on an online message board. Most applicants saw only blank screens when they tapped into their files, but some Harvard applicants glimpsed preliminary decisions about whether they would be admitted.

Carnegie Mellon's Tepper School of Business has already said it will deny the applications of proven hackers.

## Prescription for needy

**KS** TOPEKA — While many states consider reducing benefits or overhauling social programs to save money, Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius wants to expand medical services for the needy.

Sebelius, a Democrat, has proposed increasing tobacco taxes to finance an expansion of the state's Medicaid program to cover more poor adults, making her an unusual example of a governor who wants to spend more.

Sebelius' goal is Medicaid coverage for adults at the federal poverty level, \$19,350 for a family of four, instead of the current threshold of \$7,160.

## Spreading the wealth

**ME** FREEPORT — About 4,700 L.L. Bean employees will receive bonuses totaling 12.5 percent of their annual base salaries after the company announced record sales of \$1.4 billion for fiscal 2004. An additional 5,600 seasonal workers will get \$150 bonuses. The privately held L.L. Bean said sales increased 9 percent from 2003.

## Making music together

**MO** ST. LOUIS — Musicians from 14 symphony orchestras across the country were set to join St. Louis Symphony musicians for a free concert to thank the community for its support during a recently ended two-month strike. The program will feature more than 80 musicians who will be directed by Benjamin Zander, conductor of the Boston Philharmonic.

## Girl, 5, kicked off bus

**TX** DALLAS — A school bus driver accused of forcing a 5-year-old girl to get off the bus more than a mile from her scheduled stop was placed on paid administrative leave pending an investigation.

Jadian Anderson said the driver made her daughter, Syria, get off the bus after she complained that another student was hitting her. "He did not leave her with another adult; he left her on the street," Anderson said. "He was very negligent, and he endangered my child."

Syria walked about a half mile before a crossing guard saw her and noticed she was crying. While the guard was trying to figure out where she lived, a relative drove by, saw the girl and picked her up. The driver, who was not identified, also is employed by the Dallas Independent School District as a hall monitor.

Stories and photos from wire services

## FACES



Humphrey Bogart exuded the word "cool" as Rick Blaine in the 1942 hit "Casablanca." Bogart appeared in 85 films and was nominated three times for the best actor Academy Award, winning for "The African Queen" in 1951. He died in 1957.

# The kings of movie cool

When it comes to men in films, these guys are just the right temperature

BY BARRY KOLTNOW  
The Orange County Register

**B**e cool. It's not just a movie title. In Hollywood, being cool can be a career for an actor. At the very least, it can be a single role that becomes etched in our pop-culture consciousness. There are cool actors who never played cool characters. The late James Dean was the epitome of cool in the 1950s. But there are no cool characters in his abbreviated resume. Johnny Depp is the coolest guy in town right now. Sorry, no cool characters.

And yet, John Travolta has a plethora of cool roles in his portfolio. He started out cool in "Saturday Night Fever," continued being cool in "Grease" and even found cool in middle age with the role of well-dressed loan shark Chili Palmer in "Get Shorty." He reprises the role in the sequel "Be Cool," which finished in second place during its opening in U.S. theaters.

Travolta's thoughtful but tough Palmer got us thinking about cool guys in movies. Sure, there have been cool female roles — played by the likes of Mae West, Barbara Stanwyck, Bette Davis and Katharine Hepburn — but they will have to wait for another story.

This story deals with manly men, and the coolness that engulfs them.

The criteria for making the list was entirely subjective. It's a little difficult to describe what constitutes a cool character, despite being a Hollywood staple. It's certainly not Albert Brooks in "Broadcast News." Sweating through your shirt is not a sign of cool.

Woody Allen's Alvy Singer from "Annie Hall" also didn't make the list. A cool character is not afraid of lobsters.

A cool character has to exhibit a strong measure of control. People trust him and expect him to know what to do in any situation. He doesn't lose his cool when the chips are down. He is usually attractive to the opposite sex and is admired by other men.

He certainly can be less-than-heroic. This is not about heroes. John Wayne didn't make the list. This is not about romantic leading men.

Don't look for Robert Redford. This is not about dancing — no Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly. This is not about elegance, so don't expect Gregory Peck or Morgan Freeman.

Cool is a characteristic that we can't always define, but we recognize it as soon as we see it. You'll probably notice that the current crop of young male stars is under-represented on the list. Don't shoot the messenger. It's not our fault if the characters they portray lack the all-important cool factor.

Once again, this is not about cool actors. This is about cool characters.

## Snider to attend school talent show

Dee Snider will go just about anywhere to defend the right to rock.

Snider, frontman for Twisted Sister, whose 1984 hit "We're Not Gonna Take It" salutes teen rebellion, says he'll attend Hamburg (Pa.) Area High School's annual talent show next month when students plug in their amplifiers and let loose.

School administrators had threatened to bar rock bands from the show because of potential injuries caused by moshing, a form of dancing in which participants slam into each other.

Snider, now a disc jockey at Philadelphia rock station WMMR-FM, heard about the controversy and ranted on air about it. School officials eventually backed down, and Snider helped arrange for a security company to work the show.



Snider

## Costas to receive award

Bob Costas will receive the Dick Schapp Award for Excellence in Sports Journalism at a dinner on April 11.

The award is presented annually by the Nassau County Sports Commission in Manhasset, N.Y.

Costas, a 16-time Emmy winner and veteran of NBC, has hosted six Olympics, the World Series, NBA finals and the Super Bowl. The award was established in 2002 in memory of Dick Schapp, a journalist and broadcaster.

Costas is the host of HBO's "On the Record With Bob Costas" and co-host of "Inside the NFL."



Costas

## Supermodel's tale of tsunami survival

Petra Nemcova talks about her harrowing experience and the death of her boyfriend, Simon Atlee, in the pounding waves of the South Asian tsunami, in an interview to air on ABC.

"There are lots of things which I would love to tell him, but in some way, I also feel that I lost the person closest to me," the 25-year-old supermodel tells Diane Sawyer on "Prime-time Live," which was slated to air on Wednesday in the States. "And I got a second chance to live. So in a way I feel that I live for both of us ... and I will do my best."

Nemcova and Atlee, a 33-year-old British fashion photographer, were vacationing at the resort of Phuket in Thailand when the waves swept through their beach hut on Dec. 26. Nemcova was pulled away from Atlee and eventually clung to a palm tree for nearly eight hours before being rescued. Atlee's body was identified March 3 by officials in Thailand.



Nemcova

## Keith, Jackson, McGraw to headline fest

Toby Keith, Alan Jackson and Tim McGraw are the big stars at this year's WE Fest country music festival near Detroit Lakes in northwest Minnesota.

Keith will headline the first day of concerts on Aug. 4. Others on the first day's bill include Big & Rich, The Charlies, Daniel Serrano and Sherry Dandley.

Jackson performs Aug. 5. Other performers that may include Sara Evans, Sawyer Brown, Joe Nichols, Emory Drive and The Wrights.

McGraw closes the festival on Aug. 6. He'll be joined by "Redneck Woman" singer Gretchen Wilson, Dierks Bentley, Trick Pony and Shelly Fairchild.

Ticket prices range from \$10 to \$500.



Keith



McGraw

## YOUR MONEY

# Have money? Can't dodge debt collectors

BY LEVA M. AUGSTUMS

The Dallas Morning News

If you don't think you've dealt with a debt collector, you may already have.

That letter in the mail saying you owe money for an overdue DVD rental — chances are it's from the collection agency.

And those dimertine phone calls you ignore may not be telemarketers but creditors instead.

If you use credit cards, have loans or pay utility bills, you have debts. And if you fall behind even by a few days in paying those debts or if an error is made on your accounts, debt collectors can contact you by mail and phone until they hear from you.

Yes, it's annoying. And yes, it can be time-consuming. But creditors and consumer advocates agree you can't ignore it.

"The important thing is to communicate," said Harry Strauss III, president of the Association of Credit and Collection Professionals, a Minneapolis-based trade group that represents collection agencies.

"Don't avoid the call. Don't avoid the letter. It's in your best interest to find out more about the obligation."

The Federal Trade Commission prohibits professional, third-party collection businesses, agents and attorneys from treating you unfairly.

The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act also specifically prohibits the use of harassment and false statements by debt collec-

tors. States have similar laws.

As a consumer, you have rights under the laws. But so do debt collectors. They know their rights, so it's good for you to know yours.

So you've been contacted by a debt collector. Now what? First, don't panic. It means someone values your business.

Second, don't get angry. The Federal Trade Commission restricts the actions of anyone trying to collect money you owe.

The laws cover personal, family and household debts, including money owed for automobiles, medical expenses and credit-card charges.

In most cases, a debt collector's first contact is made through the mail.

However, if you first receive a phone call, the debt collector must send you written notification within five working days detailing the amount of debt; the name of the creditor who reformed the debt to the collector; and what action to take if you believe you do not owe the money.

Leaving a message on your answering machine doesn't count. The debt collector must speak with the debtor. In some states a debtor's spouse qualifies.

When debt collectors make the first contact, whether by phone or mail, they are obliged to identify themselves, tell you they are attempting to collect a debt and explain that any information they obtain will be used for that purpose.

It's usually in your best interest to talk to them. However, if you feel that you have been wrongfully contacted or if your debt is more



The Dallas Morning News

complicated than just an overdue DVD, you don't have to settle the debt in that initial phone call.

"Be careful. Don't give them all your information right away. You have some time," said Bud Hibbs, a financial counselor and consultant in Fort Worth, Texas. "The biggest mistake that customers make is giving access to their money."

If you don't agree with the col-

lector, you have 30 days to dispute — in writing — all or part of the debt.

The debt collector must then obtain proof of the debt and stop all collection efforts until the verification is mailed to you.

"It's good to have a paper trail," Hibbs said. "That way you have proof if you need to dispute or report a violation."

You also have the option to request that the collector cease communication with you. At that time, the debt collector may then contact you only once more to advise you of further action

— including legal action — will be taken.

Be careful. That request could be more costly than the debt itself, especially if you have to take on attorney and court fees.

And also be aware that if a court enters a judgment against you, the creditor may repossess your property or garnish your wages.

And what if you file personal bankruptcy? The debt collectors won't contact you anymore. Instead, they'll deal with your lawyer and the bankruptcy court.

Just because you've chosen to avoid the debt collector doesn't mean action isn't being taken.

For starters, you are still liable for any legitimate debt you owe.

And by the time a debt collector makes contact with you, in many cases your debt has already been reported to the credit bureaus. It can remain on your credit report for seven years from the date of the delinquency on your account.

Debt collectors can call you at home between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. They can even call you at work unless you inform them your employer prohibits it.

"Debt collectors say they are used to getting hung up on."

"That doesn't mean we are going to say 'pay it,'" said Joyce Anderton, a partner at ACH Financial Group, a Kansas-based collections agency.

When calling, debt collectors cannot misrepresent their identity, and they must use businesslike language. They also cannot make repetitive or excessively frequent phone calls to annoy or harass you.

What they can do is contact people who aren't directly involved in your debt to get information on where you live and work — as long as they don't talk about the debt.

But they can only contact each person once, unless they believe the person gave incomplete information.

More often than not, consumers think up excuses. They are out to get them, Anderton said.

"I think they think we are going to say 'pay it,' no matter what," she said. "We just want to talk to you, find out why you have the debt and help you figure out how to pay it back."

## TUESDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES				
52-week High	Low	Index	% Chg	52-week High
10,364.40	9,716.40	Dow Jones Industrial	-0.24	10,364.40
3,050.00	2,743.40	Dow Jones Transportation	-0.17	3,050.00
353.82	259.08	Dow Jones Utilities	-0.27	353.82
7,052.00	6,171.33	NASDAQ Composite	-0.14	7,052.00
1,539.14	1,156.74	AMEX Index	-0.14	1,539.14
2,129.14	1,750.82	Nasdaq Composite	-0.14	2,129.14
1,279.11	1,060.72	S&P 500	-0.14	1,279.11
548.29	458.29	Russell 2000	-0.14	548.29
656.11	515.90	Russell 2000	-0.14	656.11
656.11	515.90	Russell 2000	-0.14	656.11

NYSE					AMEX					NASDAQ				
Most Active (\$1 or more)					Most Active (\$1 or more)					Most Active (\$1 or more)				
Name	Vol	00	12	Chg	Name	Vol	00	12	Chg	Name	Vol	00	12	Chg
Alcoa	570.01	7.13	+0.07		SPDR	4428.04	122.33	+3.27		Nasdaq100trf	342.13	37.68	+0.38	
Motor	30.99	1.36	+0.01		Semior	240.67	13.98	+0.05		Intel	5182.18	24.80	+0.11	
General Motors	30.99	1.36	+0.01		General Motors	30.99	1.36	+0.01		Microsoft	5097.24	25.40	+0.07	
ExxonMobil	30.99	1.36	+0.01		ExxonMobil	30.99	1.36	+0.01		UnitedHealth	5986.56	7.44	+0.07	
Merck	30.99	1.36	+0.01		Biogen	748.08	19.91	+1.22		Sanofi	596.54	4.37	+0.11	
Johnson & Johnson	30.99	1.36	+0.01		US EIA	570.24	44.56	+0.05		SanMicro	1087.54	4.37	+0.11	
UnitedHealth	30.99	1.36	+0.01		Solstice	71.51	5.61	+0.05		Oracle	24.04	1.00	+0.01	
Amgen	30.99	1.36	+0.01		GreyWolf	403.79	4.49	+0.01		ApMAdm	369.52	16.22	+0.32	
Novartis	30.99	1.36	+0.01		GreyWolf	381.18	98.54	+0.05		AppScs	56.27	48.53	+2.22	
Roche	30.99	1.36	+0.01		GreyWolf	381.18	98.54	+0.05		AppScs	56.27	48.53	+2.22	

KEY DEFENSE STOCKS				
Name	Div	PE	52-week High	52-week Low
Boeing	3.75	17.01	48.90	+11.1
Raytheon	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
Northrop Grumman	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
General Dynamics	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
Lockheed Martin	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
Boeing	3.75	17.01	48.90	+11.1
Raytheon	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
Northrop Grumman	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
General Dynamics	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
Lockheed Martin	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
Boeing	3.75	17.01	48.90	+11.1
Raytheon	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
Northrop Grumman	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
General Dynamics	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7
Lockheed Martin	1.10	14.52	4.90	-11.7

KEY MUTUAL FUNDS				
Name	Div	PE	52-week High	52-week Low
Fidelity Asset Manager	3.75	17.01	48.90	+11.1
Fidelity Asset Manager	3.75	17.01	48.90	+11.1
Fidelity Asset Manager	3.75	17.01	48.90	+11.1
Fidelity Asset Manager	3.75	17.01	48.90	+11.1
Fidelity Asset Manager	3.75	17.01	48.90	+11.1

## EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		\$1.3731
Dollar buys		-0.7283
British pound		\$1.59
Japanese yen (March 11)		102.00
South Korean won (March 10)		97.00
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dinar)		1.3777
British pound		\$1.5933
Canada (Dollar)		0.7070
Denmark (Krone)		6.4603
Egypt (Pound)		5.799
Hong Kong (Dollar)		7.79
Hungary (Forint)		103.77
Israel (Sheqel)		58.08
Japan (Yen)		109.95
Kuwait (Dinar)		4.2974
Norway (Krone)		5.58
Qatar (Riyal)		3.50
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)		3.50
Singapore (Dollar)		1.368
South Korea (Won)		1,004.32
Switzerland (Franc)		1.25
Thailand (Baht)		38.31
U.S. dollar		1.00
U.S. dollar		1.00
U.S. dollar		1.00
U.S. dollar		1.00
U.S. dollar		1.00

PRECIOUS METALS				
Name	Div	PE	52-week High	52-week Low
Gold			\$439.80	
Silver			\$7.47	
Palladium			\$1,000.00	
Platinum			\$1,000.00	
Gold			\$439.80	
Silver			\$7.47	
Palladium			\$1,000.00	
Platinum			\$1,000.00	
Gold			\$439.80	
Silver			\$7.47	
Palladium			\$1,000.00	
Platinum			\$1,000.00	

## INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.50
Discount rate	5.50
Federal funds market rate	5.50
3-month bill	2.75
30-year Treasury	5.50

## To our readers

Tom Philpott's column will return to Your Money on Thursday.

## Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

## Cracking passwords

The Associated Press

Our computer-based world is now a maze of passwords, designed to protect our sensitive data from thieves and snoops.

We mix and match birth dates, mothers' maiden names, friends, ages, addresses and nicknames in a jumble of codes for our electronic selves.

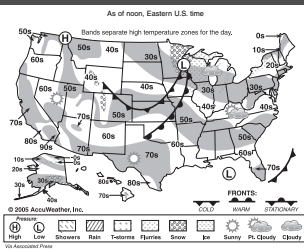
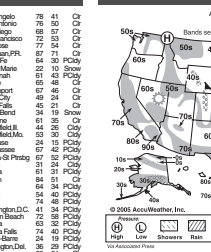
But are we safe? The folks at Fihberk Communications Corp., a Blue Bell, Pa.-based maker of software and other high-tech products, conducted a recent password-cracking experiment.

With an eight-character password on a standard 95-character keyboard, there are quite a few possible combinations: 6,634,204,312,890,025 to be exact, according to Fihberk.

The company then tested a standard computer's calculative prowess against our common habit of using simple words as passwords to protected electronic areas.

So, for the example, using the word "password" as the password, a standard desktop computer took less than a second to determine this, when assembling all the different letter and number combinations. Adding the single digit 1 to the password required 3 seconds. Typing "password" with an asterisk in the middle took the computer 38 seconds to decipher.

And the combination that was not cracked, after the machine was left to compute for more than 10 minutes? "p@\$\$w0rd"



Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

**STARS AND STRIPES®**  
Your Hometown Newspaper



# Horoscope

The new moon in Pisces brings extraordinary powers of vulnerability. But wait—how can vulnerability be a "power"? It takes a strong person to let down the guard and allow the world to imprint its message. Before you use the new-moon energy to embark on your new goal, relationship or project, take a moment to listen to the whispering wind.

## TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

**(March 10).** You follow through until you get what you want! Learning how to conquer procrastination changes your life's complexion. The year spring shows you to be so attractive you'll need to guard your private time or it gets snatched up. Singles will date someone very special. Start new projects in June. Your best signs for love are Capricorn and Virgo.

## ARIES (March 21-April 19).

You're in a dream state, fantasizing about the impossible—an insanely high target. You may as well believe you can do it. Your sign mate, Thornton Wilder, said, "Hope, like faith... is nothing if it is not ridiculous."

## TAURUS (April 20-May 20).

You're getting the info you need to be a more efficient judge of character. You can look into your own future and see how a relationship will go. Hint: Someone who e-mails you constantly has too much time on his or her hands.

## GEMINI (May 21-June 21).

Those close to you're heavily on your abilities. Share the burden. You have terrific luck attracting just the person for the job, which makes this the perfect time to find a reliable mechanic, a kind dentist and a dependable baby sitter.

## CANCER (June 22-July 22).

While it's noble to take one for the team, it's stupid to take two, three or four for the team. If you feel like you've been beaten up on the playground of life, it's an excellent day to stand up to the bully.

## LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).

Vibes are hot for getting into tiptop shape. Work it—you'll have fun, too. Warning: Be wary of a relationship that

involves not only the object of your affection but also an ever-present mother figure.

## VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

Expectations are rising. You look around at the people close to you and wonder, "What have you done for me lately?" Is it so wrong to want a love who can bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan?

## LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

Anticipation can be exhilarating for a short while, but if it goes on longer, it's practically comatose. When you find yourself waiting and waiting, repeat this mantra: "I am a self-empowered, radiant jewel."

## SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).

You're moving into a new chapter. At the end of the day, evaluate your experiences to learn as much as you can, appreciate the gifts acquired and move on. Tomorrow, literally get up on the other side of the bed.

## SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

Socially, you're hot—of course. Who doesn't like being around someone who embraces it all—the funny, the embarrassing, the romantic and all those other experiences that make your days interesting?

## CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

Your special project is the focus. Work harder to convince the money people that yours is the one to back. This process will teach you much about your level of commitment and how strong you are in your convictions.

## AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

Respect, not money, is the issue, though they get tangled into one another. For family harmony, schedule personal alone time, and then, keep the appointment. When you're happy with you, others give you golden treatment.

## PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

The late nights are starting to catch up to you. If you can barely keep your eyes open at work, you're not the only one. Grab a colleague, and take a walk to the coffee stand down the block. The gossip you learn is enlightening.

Creators Syndicate



Holiday Mathis

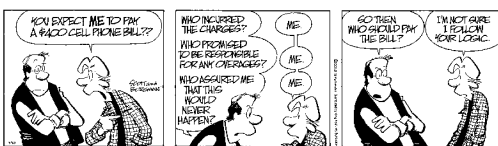
## Calvin and Hobbes



## Jump Start



## Zits



## Cathy



## Hi and Lois



## Beetle Bailey



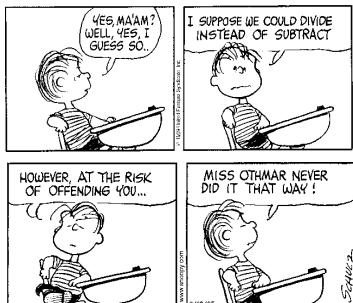
## Red and Rover



## Better or Worse



## Peanuts











# Kansas City, Minnesota get defensive

The Associated Press

Kendrell Bell signed with the Kansas City Chiefs and Fred Smoot agreed to a deal with the Minnesota Vikings as two of the NFL's worst defenses plugged holes through free agency Tuesday.

**NFL roundup**  
Smoot had 16 interceptions over five seasons with the Washington Redskins and was selected as an alternate to the Pro Bowl. He will form a quality tandem at cornerback with Antoine Winfield, who was Minnesota's top free agent signing last season.

Bell, the former Pittsburgh linebacker, was AP Defensive Rookie of the Year in 2001. He played in only three games last season because of groin and shoulder injuries, and Pittsburgh re-signed the much cheaper Larry Foote, who started most of the season in his place.

The New York Giants also passed on Bell last week because of his injury history and salary demands and signed Antonio Pierce from Washington. Pierce had

## Chiefs sign LB Bell; Vikings add CB Smoot

played in a 4-3, while Bell's experience was in a 3-4.

That didn't seem to trouble Kansas City, which has been desperately seeking an impact player for its defense the past few years.

"He is a quality football player as well as a quality person," Chiefs President Carl Peterson said of Bell, who signed a seven-year deal.

In other deals Tuesday, Tampa Bay re-signed veteran wide receiver Joey Galloway and Cleveland signed a former Buc, guard Cosley Coleman. The Browns also ended the contract of veteran quarterback Trent Diller, obtained from Seattle over the weekend, and extended his deal from one year to four.

"I feel like I've got a lot of football left," Diller said. "I love this game. I love the travel. I love the way Mondays feel after a win or a loss. I love the pressure. There's not a guy who loves football more than I do. I feel like my best football is ahead of me."

Another wide receiver, Santana Moss, passed his physical with Washington after being traded from the New York Jets for wideout Laveranues Coles. The deal will be completed when Coles passes a physical with the Jets.

Another receiver, Cedrick Wilson, left San Francisco to sign with Pittsburgh, apparently ending any chance the Steelers will re-sign Plaxico Burress. Burress, who has gotten less attention than expected, is scheduled to visit the Giants on Wednesday.

"A lot of strange things can happen in free agency," Steelers director of football operations Kevin Colbert said. "We never want to say never."

Safety Robert Griffith agreed to a two-year contract with Arizona, the Cardinals' fourth free-agent acquisition. The team previously signed offensive tackle Oliver Ross (Steelers), quarterback Kurt Warner (Giants) and defensive end Chike Okefor (Seahawks).

"We're making some major changes this winter and, I mean, who's surprised by that?" coach Dennis Green said. "You think I could stand another year like last year? There's just no way."

Griffith, 34, left the Browns to rejoin Green, who brought him into the NFL in 1994 with the Vikings as an undrafted rookie out of San Diego State. The 5-foot-11, 200-pound Griffith made a career-high 157 tackles, including 93 solos, eight tackles-for-loss, one interception and one sack in 2004.

The Giants also announced the signing of former Atlanta kicker Jay Feely and are expected to sign veteran Jim Miller as a backup to second-year quarterback Eli Manning.

New England, which lost Joe Andruzzi to Cleveland, re-signed its other guard, Stephen Neal, a college wrestler who never played football at Cal State-Bakersfield.

Carolina Panthers receiver Ricky Proehl, who turned 37 on Monday, will put retirement on hold and return for one more season, his 16th in the NFL.

# Romanowski shed tears on the stand

By IVAN DELVENTHAL

(Costa Times  
Walnut Creek, Calif.)

OAKLAND, Calif. — Bill Romanowski, the former Oakland Raiders linebacker, teared up Tuesday afternoon as he testified about his own Jekyll-and-Hyde persona — one side a gladiator in the NFL and the other a mild-mannered husband and father of two.

Romanowski's testimony came in the trial of a lawsuit brought against him by ex-teammate Marcus Williams over a punch on the practice field a year and a half ago.

Williams, 27, contends that Romanowski, a 16-year NFL veteran, knocked off his helmet and connected with a right-hand to the face during practice with the Raiders on Aug. 24, 2003. Williams' attorneys say the blow was unprovoked and knocked Will-

iams, a special teams player and aspiring tight end, out of professional football.

James Brosnahan, Williams' lead attorney, called Romanowski to the witness stand on Tuesday.

During his testimony, tears welled up in Romanowski's eyes as he described the challenges of being a pro football player and a citizen in the ordinary world.

"You had this family man off the field with a wife and two kids," Romanowski said of himself, his voice breaking. "Then you have this so-called warrior on the field."

Dressed in a tan suit and blue shirt, Romanowski testified that he is now working on a book entitled "Romo: My Jekyll and Hyde Life," which explores the issue of his two-sided personality.

In court Tuesday he admitted to punching Williams on the eye in question, but said he did so during a fight that broke out at the

end of a play during practice. Romanowski, 38, said he reacted after being pushed in the back by the younger player.

"Did you punch him as hard as you could?" Brosnahan asked.

"I wouldn't know," Romanowski replied.

Medical experts called by Williams have testified that the punch broke the ex-player's eye socket and caused brain trauma that brought on an array of cognitive and emotional problems.

During his questioning, Brosnahan delved into four on-field incidents during Romanowski's career, including one kick, one punch and two improper hits that occurred during games and that resulted in the league imposing tens of thousands of dollars in fines.

In one 1997 incident cited by Brosnahan, Romanowski, then with the Denver Broncos, was fined \$20,000 by the NFL for a hel-

met-to-helmet hit that broke the jaw of Carolina Panthers quarterback Kerry Collins.

Romanowski testified that football is a "very violent, violent game" and that "there are things that happen out there that you get fined for."

During questioning by Jeffrey Springer, his own attorney, Romanowski said he felt badly for Williams. He testified that both he and Williams should be accountable for what occurred.

The questioning also gave him the chance to narrate for the jury the story of his life, and Romanowski became emotional at times. He spoke of being a 5-foot-9, 140-pound ninth-grader in Vernon, Conn., who decided after reading a Sports Illustrated article about legendary running back Herschel Walker that he would win a football scholarship.

By his senior year, Romanowski told the jury, thanks to hard



Testifying in the suit brought against him by an ex-teammate, former linebacker Bill Romanowski (above) cried while saying it was difficult to be a pro football player, husband and father.

work and genes — he had grown to 6-3 and 215 pounds — he was heavily recruited.

Romanowski is set to continue testifying Wednesday.

# Coles says he was not catching on in Gibbs' offense

By NUNYO DEMASIO

The Washington Post



WASHINGTON — The pivotal moment for Laveranues Coles occurred during the regular-season finale, as the Washington Redskins were defeating the Minnesota Vikings 21-18.

During the season, the Redskins wide receiver had expressed displeasure to coach Joe Gibbs about Washington's conservative offense, and the two met near the midway point of the season to try working things out. But Coles felt that little had changed in Gibbs' system the rest of the way. And with the Redskins eliminated from the playoffs, and tailback Clinton Portis out with an injury, Coles searched for a sign that things would change in 2005.

Against the Vikings, however, Coles finished the game with three catches for 37 yards as Gibbs called 31 rushes, mostly for reserve tailback Ladell Betts. Despite the victory, Coles felt that Gibbs' play-calling indicated that he had no future in Washington.

"That was the final nail in the coffin," Coles, who was traded to the New York Jets last weekend for wide receiver Santana Moss, said Tuesday. "He [Gibbs] wasn't talking to me. I didn't see eye to eye. I just felt like it [the offense] wasn't for me. He knew that. I knew that. So we felt that it was best that we both go our separate ways."

After the season, Gibbs and Coles attempted to reconcile at Redskins Park during two extended meetings.

The day after the season finale

on Jan. 3, Gibbs instructed an assistant to get Coles for a meeting. But Coles left Redskins Park without talking to Gibbs. Coles said he returned to the facility later to meet with Gibbs. "I was wrong for walking out," Coles said. "I admit that. But I went back."

Gibbs initially broached the matter of Coles' right big toe injury, which has bothered him the past two seasons. But the discussion eventually turned to Coles' desire "to leave." According to Coles, Gibbs said that his departure could be worked out if Coles forfeited some money. "He said: 'The other option is you might have to stay here,'" Coles recalled. "I know you don't want to do that because it wouldn't be comfortable for either of us."

After the meeting, Coles said

that he left it up to his agent, Roosevelt Barnes, to work out a departure. Coles said that he was never recruited.

"It went from 'OK,' to 'We never shook on it,'" Coles said, "to 'We never even said it.' When me and Gibbs talked about it first, it seemed like that's what was going to happen."

Gibbs, in meetings during most of Tuesday, did not return a call seeking comment. Snyder's spokesman, Karl Swanson, did not return voice messages seeking comment.

Gibbs has said that both sides never made such an agreement. Barnes didn't return several calls Tuesday.

Laveranues Coles (above), traded last week to the Jets, said, "He [coach Joe Gibbs] wasn't flexible. We didn't see eye to eye. I just felt like it [the offense] wasn't for me."

# Webber still getting his feet wet with 76ers

The Philadelphia Press

When Philadelphia acquired Chris Webber on the eve of the trading deadline, the 76ers knew he was expected to turn the 76ers into serious contenders for the Eastern Conference title.

Seven games later, Webber is unhappy with his playing time and getting booed by Philadelphia fans.

For the third straight game, Webber was basically a non-factor in the 76ers' 104-85 loss to Golden State on Tuesday night. The five-time All-Star sat out long stretches, including the last 4:38 of the third quarter, and finished with eight points on 3-for-12 shooting in 30 minutes.

Webber was booed a few times during the game, only to be introduced to thunderous applause during his home debut. Fans booed after an errant bounce pass off the board and again when he came back into the game about two minutes into the fourth quarter.

"Obviously, C-Webb sees what's going on and it can only get worse," Philadelphia's Allen Iverson said. "It's not his fault. It's all our fault. He'll just have to deal with it."

Before the game, Webber said he was used to negativity and controversy surrounding him wherever he plays. He said he would use the negativity as a springboard, but was tired already of answering questions about how well he'll fit in.

"I want to make the best of the rest of the time I have here," he said. "I'm still a great player. I'm not going to ever get used to playing 17 minutes a game. It's something we'll address after the season. Right now our goal is to make the playoffs."

"I thought I was coming into a situation where I would be utilized as the player that it was," Webber averaged 21.3 points and 9.7 rebounds in 46 games before Sacramento Kings' arrival down to 14.4 points and 8.0 rebounds with the 76ers. After averaging 36.3 minutes for Sacramento, Webber reached 30 minutes for the first time in three games.

He met with coach Jim O'Brien on Monday about his lack of playing time.

"This is Philadelphia, the toughest place in the world," said Iverson, who scored 33 points with a franchise-record 12 turnovers. "I told him what to expect. I let him know I would expect him to be like the Chris Webber he was."

Webber failed to reach double digits in scoring for only the second time this season, and the first since getting six points against San Antonio on Jan. 23. He was out of the locker room before it opened and not available for post-game comments. O'Brien said Webber and blamed the loss on fatigue and poor defense.

"I believe Chris is a very confident guy and will get his stride here real soon," O'Brien said.

**Cavaliers 111, Magic 92:** At Cleveland, LeBron James scored 23 points and Drew Gooden had

## Roundup

23 in his return to the starting line-up as the Cavaliers snapped a six-game losing streak. James added eight assists and seven rebounds in 40 minutes and Gooden finished 10-for-10 from the field.

**Knicks 93, Wizards 83:** At New York, the Knicks improved to 5-1 since the trade deadline, netting 19 points from Jamal Crawford and solid all-around contributions from several players.

Crawford also had six assists and six rebounds, Kurt Thomas added 15 points, 11 rebounds and four assists, and Stephon Marbury had 14 points, 10 assists and four rebounds.

**Bucks 105, Hawks 101:** Mo Williams had 22 points and 10 assists and Desmond Mason also scored 22 points to lead the Bucks. Williams was 9-for-13 from the field, matching a career scoring high.

Atlanta lost its 22nd straight on the road and 12th in a row overall.

**Timberwolves 102, Bobcats 97:** At Minneapolis, Kevin Garnett scored 22 of his 30 points in the second half, preventing the Timberwolves from being swept by the expansion Bobcats.

**Spurs 90, Nets 74:** At San Antonio, Tim Duncan made a quick return to the lineup after leaving with a knee injury. He scored 18 points and eight rebounds. The Nets hit just four of their first 25 shots.

**Pacers 89, Jazz 83:** Stephen Jackson scored 30 points and visiting Indiana rallied after blowing a 25-point lead. Reggie Miller finished with 24 points in his final game at Utah, which nearly turned into an embarrassing loss.

**Kings 85, Grizzlies 82:** Mike Bibby's long three-pointer as time expired was upheld on a controversial video review and the Kings got their 14th straight home victory against the Grizzlies.

Peja Stojakovic's inbound pass with a 14 seconds left tie tipped by James Posey, but the clock didn't start until Bibby grabbed the ball, turned and hit an amazing three-pointer from several feet behind the line.

**Rockets 97, SuperSonics 95:** In Portland, Steve McCarney had 30 points and Yao Ming tied a franchise record by scoring 16 in the second half. Houston outscored the Sonics 22-6 in the third period, with those six points setting franchise records for both teams.

**Clippers 110, Lakers 101:** Corey Maggette scored 30 points, Elton Brand had 22 points and 15 rebounds and the Clippers defeated the Lakers despite Kobe Bryant's 41 points.

Bobby Simmons added 16 points, Chris Kaman scored 12 and the Clippers' defense held the Lakers despite Kobe Bryant's 41 points.

## NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	29	42	.475	2 1/2
Philadelphia	29	42	.475	2 1/2
New York	26	45	.361	6
New Jersey	26	45	.361	6
Toronto	25	46	.349	6 1/2
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	46	12	.789	0
Orlando	39	19	.672	1 1/2
Washington	31	27	.533	5 1/2
Charlotte	28	30	.483	8
Atlanta	28	30	.483	8
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	36	22	.621	0
Chicago	32	26	.552	4 1/2
Indiana	30	28	.519	6 1/2
Cleveland	25	34	.424	11 1/2

Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	47	13	.783	0
Dallas	39	21	.650	7 1/2
Houston	35	25	.583	11 1/2
Memphis	31	29	.517	15 1/2
New Orleans	13	46	.220	33 1/2
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	41	19	.685	0
Portland	38	22	.633	3 1/2
Minnesota	30	30	.500	11
Utah	22	37	.369	18 1/2
Denver	20	40	.333	21 1/2
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	46	14	.767	0
Sacramento	39	21	.650	5 1/2
L.A. Lakers	38	22	.633	6 1/2
Golden State	29	31	.483	15 1/2

Tuesday's games				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	40	14	.741	0
Portland	38	22	.633	3 1/2
New York	93	83	.475	0
Washington	89	91	.491	0
Minnesota	102	97	.510	0
Charlotte	97	97	.500	0
Indiana	89	91	.491	0
Atlanta	85	93	.479	0
Orlando	97	97	.500	0

Wednesday's games				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	41	13	.758	0
Atlanta	40	14	.741	0
San Antonio	40	14	.741	0
Phoenix	40	14	.741	0
Chicago	40	14	.741	0
Minnesota	40	14	.741	0
L.A. Lakers	40	14	.741	0
Charlotte	40	14	.741	0
Portland	40	14	.741	0
Golden State	40	14	.741	0

Thursday's games				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	41	13	.758	0
Atlanta	40	14	.741	0
San Antonio	40	14	.741	0
Phoenix	40	14	.741	0
Chicago	40	14	.741	0
Minnesota	40	14	.741	0
L.A. Lakers	40	14	.741	0
Charlotte	40	14	.741	0
Portland	40	14	.741	0
Golden State	40	14	.741	0

Friday's games				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	41	13	.758	0
Atlanta	40	14	.741	0
San Antonio	40	14	.741	0
Phoenix	40	14	.741	0
Chicago	40	14	.741	0
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Golden State	40	14	.741	0

Saturday's games				
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Sunday's games				
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Chicago	40	14	.741	0
Minnesota	40	14	.741	0
L.A. Lakers	40	14	.741	0
Charlotte	40	14	.741	0
Portland	40	14	.741	0
Golden State	40	14	.741	0

Washington				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	29	42	.475	2 1/2
Philadelphia	29	42	.475	2 1/2
New York	26	45	.361	6
New Jersey	26	45	.361	6
Toronto	25	46	.349	6 1/2
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	46	12	.789	0
Orlando	39	19	.672	1 1/2
Washington	31	27	.533	5 1/2
Charlotte	28	30	.483	8

# Gretzky doesn't want to use replacements

BY IRA PODELL  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Wayne Gretzky will put a team of replacement players on the ice if he has to. He just won't like it.

"I hope it doesn't come to that, I really don't," said Gretzky, the managing partner of the Phoenix Coyotes.

Negotiations between the NHL and the players' association are scheduled to start again Thursday or Friday. If a deal can't be reached before the start of next season, commissioner Gary Bettman might decide to use replacement players to guarantee there is an NHL season.

"There are 700 players, they are the best in the world," Gretzky said Tuesday. "They play in this league because it's the best game in the world. But everything is sort of wide open now because 400 guys are playing in Europe, you've got guys playing in the East Coast league, they are starting a new WHA."

"If 30 teams say 'We're playing ... we're one of those 30 teams, we're going to play.'"

It's bad enough that the NHL became the first major North American sports league to lose a whole year to a labor dispute, but it certainly can't afford to miss two.

Gretzky saw firsthand just how far NHL players and owners are from ending the lockout, even at the height of frantic talks. Now their discussions will have to begin anew.

"It seems like they're starting at square one," he said.

Being the greatest player in NHL history puts Gretzky in a

unique position. For 20 seasons he rewrote the hockey record book, but as an owner he is on the opposite side of the fight. His club's bottom line is now his top concern.

Gretzky and Mario Lemieux took part in the previous negotiating session on Feb. 19, a meeting that failed to force a revival of the season three days after Bettman called it off.

"I hope we can get on some sort of same page or some sort of talking terms where they say 'OK, we're inching our way ahead here, let's meet again next Monday,'" Gretzky said. "If you expect these guys to come out with a deal tomorrow, that's not going to happen. I hope it does, but it's going to be tough."

In the final days before the season was wiped out, the first progress was made. Owners dropped the demand that league revenues be linked to player costs, and in turn the union agreed for the first time to accept a salary cap.

But they never got close on a number. Bettman said the NHL couldn't stretch beyond a hard cap of \$42.5 million per team, and the players' association countered with a soft cap of \$49 million.

Gretzky and Lemieux, the play-er-owner of the Pittsburgh Penguins, joined the negotiations thinking a compromise could be made. But the topic never came up.

"If you can agree on a number on a cap and then say 'Let's work everything in there,' then maybe you can be closer together than both sides thought," Gretzky said. "But that doesn't seem to be the case."



Six-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong said Paris deserved to host the 2012 Olympics.

## Armstrong backs Paris 2012 bid

The Associated Press

PARIS — Lance Armstrong threw his support behind Paris' bid for the 2012 Olympics on Wednesday, the same day International Olympic Committee members started assessing the city's bid for the Games.

In an interview with The Associated Press, the six-time Tour de France winner acknowledged he is torn between the competing Paris and New York bids, but said the French capital deserves to be picked.

Paris would be "outstanding," said Armstrong, who hails from Austin, Texas. New York also merits support given "everything they went through the last four, five years," he said, referring to the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. But he added, "If they don't win in 2012, they could win in 2016."

Moscow, Madrid and London also are competing. The Olympic host will be decided in a vote by the IOC in Singapore on July 6. French officials showed the 13-member IOC panel their plans for 2012, including presentations about the sites that would be used and the plans to build a \$2.5 billion Olympic village on an old railway yard in northern Paris.

Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, sports minister Jean-François Lamour, bid director Philippe Baudillon and others took part in the meeting at the hotel where the IOC panel is staying. Inspectors arrived Tuesday for a four-day tour of the city considered the favorite to stage the Summer Games.

Armstrong said Paris was "arguably the best candidate" for the 2008 Olympics, which went to Beijing instead.

"To be fair, I think that Paris deserves the Olympics," he said before starting Wednesday's stage of the Paris-Nice race.

Armstrong has a soft spot for Paris. For six straight years he has ridden onto the famed Champs-Élysées as winner of the Tour de France. But as an American, he

### Sports briefs

has feelings for New York, too.

"You've put me in a hard place, but I think Paris should be an out-standing city. But I also think that in some points New York deserves to have something as special as the Olympics," he said.

#### Marshall grid coach retires

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. — Marshall football coach Bob Pruett retired Wednesday after nine years, saying it was time to move on. The 61-year-old Pruett told the team of his decision in the morning and held a news conference three hours later. Larry Kueck, Marshall's associate offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, will serve as interim coach.

"It's not about winning and losing. It's not about money. It's not about anything I didn't get," Pruett said. "It's just time. It's well thought out. This is not a sudden thing."

Athletic director Bob Marcum was disappointed.

"There's no doubt, I've tried everything possible to talk coach Pruett out of it. In fact, I offered him my job," Marcum said jokingly. "I said, 'Listen, if you want to be the athletic director, that's no problem.' I'm highly mobile."

"He said, 'That's crazy. I'm giving up one pressure cooker. Why do I want to take another one?'"

The decision comes as Marshall prepares to enter Conference USA this fall. The Thundering Herd finished their final season in the Mid-American Conference with a 6-6 record, their first non-winning season in 21 years. The school moved to Division I-A in 1997, a year after it won the Division I-AA national championship.

Pruett is the most successful coach in Marshall history, going 94-23 with five MAC championships and five bowl victories.

#### Henin-Hardenne plans return at Miami Nasdaq-100 Open

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Justine Henin-Hardenne plans to return to tennis for the Nasdaq-100 Open in Miami later this month after recovering from a knee injury.

Formerly the world's top-ranked player, Henin-Hardenne has won the French, Australian and U.S. Opens the past two years.

The knee injury ended her hopes of defending her Australian Open title, forcing her to pull out of the January tournament.

"She has no more pain in her right knee," said a statement on her Web site.

#### Women's downhill postponed

LENZERHEIDE, Switzerland — The final women's World Cup downhill of the season was postponed Wednesday by heavy snowfall and was rescheduled for early Thursday.

A men's training session slated for Wednesday afternoon was also scrapped and moved to Thursday afternoon, about 1½ hours before the actual race, as officials struggled with limited time opportunities remaining this week.

Both the women's and men's final downhill were originally slated for Wednesday, but bad weather all week has made a mess of the program.

The finals end Sunday but no races have been held.

#### Ex-heavyweight champ Page upgraded to fair condition

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Former WBA heavyweight champion Greg Page has been upgraded to fair condition, although he remains on a ventilator in intensive care.

Page, 46, was admitted to Jewish Hospital on Feb. 20 with pneumonia and other complications. A hospital said Wednesday that Page's condition is slowly improving and he is resting comfortably.

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# St. Mary's hopes 25 victories, strong WCC is enough

BY JANIE MCCAULEY

The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Saint Mary's players will be closely monitoring conference tournaments this week as they practice with the hope of being selected for the NCAA tournament.

The Gaels (25-8) have made a strong case to earn their first NCAA berth in eight seasons, but after losing in the West Coast Conference tournament championship to No. 11 Gonzaga, they must wait until Sunday to learn their postseason fate.

The Bulldogs locked up their seventh straight NCAA bid with a 80-67 victory over Saint Mary's on Monday night.

"I look forward to playing in the tournament," Gaels coach Randy Bennett said. "We hope we're in it. I think we're in it. Where we play and who we play doesn't matter. I think we're a good enough team to win enough games in the tournament. Our guys have done a really great job continuing to elevate the program."

They know that this is their best chance to make a tournament run, too. The Gaels lose four senior starters, including leading scorer Paul Marigney and fearless point guard E.J. Rowland, from a team that has won 25 games and finished second to Gonzaga in the much-improved WCC. And

Bennett's name will certainly come up for job openings elsewhere this offseason.

"Who knows?" athletic director Carl Clapp said when asked about his program's NCAA chances. "We'll be watching the show on Sunday."

The WCC was stronger than ever this year, gaining national attention with big wins against nationally ranked opponents. Santa Clara shocked No. 2 North Carolina in November, and San Francisco is one of two teams to beat 18th-ranked Pacific.

The WCC reached its highest ranking of seventh in the conference RPI standings behind the six power leagues. The Gaels hope all that is enough.

"You can never be overconfident but I think we should get in," Rowland said. "We have 25 wins. We're in the second team in the WCC, which is a tough conference. We should be in it. I think we're a better team than a lot of other guys."

Saint Mary's split two regular-season meetings with Gonzaga.

"Getting a win against Gonzaga helps," said junior forward Daniel Kickert, who scored 27 points Monday. "We had a pretty tough schedule — 25 wins is a lot of wins. I think it will help our case. It's not like we went out on a really bad night. I think we proved to people we're in contention for an NCAA berth."

## Conference tournaments

### America East

Championship  
Saturday, March 12  
Northeast at Vermont

### Atlantic Coast

Thursday, March 10  
Maryland vs. Clemson  
North Carolina St. vs. Florida St.  
Miami vs. Virginia

Friday, March 11  
North Carolina vs. Maryland/Clemson  
Virginia Tech vs. Georgia Tech  
Wake Forest vs. N.C. State/Florida St.  
Duke vs. Miami/Virginia

Saturday, March 12

Semifinals

Sunday, March 13

Championship

### Atlantic Sun

Championship  
Saturday, March 12  
Central Florida Gs. Gardner-Webb 54

### Atlantic 10

Wednesday, March 9  
Richmond vs. Rhode Island  
Massachusetts vs. La Salle  
Dartmouth vs. Duquesne

Thursday, March 10  
Saint Joseph's vs. Rhode Island  
Xavier vs. Massachusetts/La Salle  
Georgetown vs. Fordham/Duquesne  
Temple vs. Dayton vs. Belmont

Friday, March 11

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Big East

Wednesday, March 9  
West Virginia vs. Providence  
Connecticut vs. Seton Hall  
Notre Dame vs. Rutgers

### Quaker

Thursday, March 10  
Boston College vs. V. Virginia/Providence  
Villanova vs. Pittsburgh  
Connecticut vs. Georgetown/Seton Hall  
Syracuse vs. Notre Dame/Rutgers

Friday, March 11

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Big Sky

Thursday, March 8  
Montana 79, Montana St. 67  
Weber St. 77, Portland St. 41

### Big South

Championship  
Saturday, March 12  
Winthrop 68, Charleston Southern 46

### Big Ten

Thursday, March 10  
Northwestern vs. Michigan  
Iowa vs. Purdue  
Ohio State vs. Penn State

Friday, March 11  
Illinois vs. Northwestern/Michigan  
Minnesota vs. Indiana  
Michigan State vs. Iowa/Purdue  
Wisconsin vs. Ohio State/Penn State

Saturday, March 12

Semifinals

Sunday, March 13

Championship

### Big 12

Thursday, March 10  
Missouri vs. Nebraska  
Iowa State vs. Baylor  
Texas A&M vs. Kansas State  
Texas vs. Colorado

Friday, March 11  
Oklahoma vs. Missouri/Nebraska  
Texas Tech vs. Iowa State/Baylor  
Kansas vs. Texas A&M/San Diego St.  
Oklahoma State vs. Texas/Colorado

Saturday, March 12

Semifinals

Sunday, March 13

Championship

### Big West

Wednesday, March 9  
UC Irvine vs. Idaho  
Long Beach State vs. UC Santa Barbara

Thursday, March 10  
Cal Fullerton vs. lower seeded winner  
Cal Northridge vs. higher seeded winner

Friday, March 11

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Colonial Athletic

Championship  
Monday, March 7  
Old Dominion 73, VA Commonwealth 66

### Conference USA

Wednesday, March 9  
Texas Christian vs. Marquette  
DePaul vs. Tulane  
Memphis vs. Saint Louis

Thursday, March 10  
Houston vs. South Florida  
Louisville vs. TCU/Marquette  
Ala.-Birmingham vs. DePaul/Tulane

Friday, March 11  
Charlotte vs. Memphis/Saint Louis  
Cincinnati vs. Houston/South Florida

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Horizon League

Championship  
Tuesday, March 8  
Wis.-Milwaukee 95, Detroit 58

### Metro Atlantic

Championship  
Thursday, March 7  
Niagara 81, Rider 59

### Mid-American

Monday, March 7  
Kent State 91, Central Michigan 60  
Akron 73, Eastern Michigan 66  
Buffalo 73, Northern Illinois 66

Bowling Green 75, Ball State 73  
Ohio St. 72, Marshall 66  
Toledo vs. Buffalo

W. Michigan vs. Akron  
Miami (Ohio) vs. Bowling Green  
Ohio vs. Kent State

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Mid-Continent

Monday, March 7  
Oral Roberts 98, IUPUI/Indiana 69  
Oakland, Mich. 56, Chicago State 53

Championship  
Tuesday, March 8  
Oakland, Mich. 57, Oral Roberts 60

### Mid-Eastern Athletic

Wednesday, March 9  
Bethune-Cookman 79, North Carolina A&T 62  
Delaware vs. Bethune-Cookman  
Hampton vs. Florida A&M

Thursday, March 10  
South Carolina St. vs. Norfolk St.  
Coppin St. vs. Morgan State

Friday, March 11

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Missouri Valley

Championship  
Monday, March 7  
Creighton 75, SW Missouri State 57

### Mountain West

Thursday, March 10  
UNLV vs. Colorado St.  
UNLV vs. Wyoming  
New Mexico vs. Brigham Young  
Utah vs. Air Force vs. San Diego St.

Friday, March 11

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Northeast

Championship  
Wednesday, March 9  
Wagner vs. Fairleigh Dickinson

### Ohio Valley

Championship  
Saturday, March 5  
Eastern Kentucky 52, Austin Peay 46

### Pac-10

Thursday, March 10  
Arizona vs. Oregon State  
UCLA vs. Oregon State

Washington State vs. Washington State  
Stanford vs. Washington State

Friday, March 11

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Patriot

Championship  
Friday, March 11  
Bucknell at Holy Cross

### Southeastern

Thursday, March 10  
South Carolina vs. Mississippi  
Mississippi State vs. Georgia

Arkansas vs. Auburn  
Alabama vs. South Carolina/Mississippi  
Florida vs. Mississippi State/Georgia

Kentucky vs. Arkansas/Tennessee  
LSU vs. Vanderbilt/Auburn

Semifinals

Sunday, March 13

Championship

### Southern

Championship  
Saturday, March 5  
Chattanooga 66, N.C.-Greensboro 62

### Southland

Tuesday, March 8  
Lamar 91, Texas A&M 83  
Northwestern St. 81, Texas-Arlington 67

San Houston 75, Texas St. 53  
Sam Houston St. 86, McNeese 70

San Houston State vs. Louisiana  
Lamar at Northwestern State  
Sam Houston State vs. Louisiana

Semifinals  
Saturday, March 12

Championship

### Southwestern Athletic

Thursday, March 10  
Alabama vs. Southern  
Alabama St. vs. Prairie View A&M

Mississippi Valley vs. Grambling  
Alabama A&M vs. Ark.-Pine Bluff

Semifinals

Sunday, March 13

Championship

### Sun Belt

Monday, March 7  
Denver 77, Western Kentucky 68  
Louisiana-Lafayette 80, Fla. International 69

Championship  
Tuesday, March 8  
Louisiana-Lafayette 88, Denver 69

### West Coast

Championship  
Monday, March 7  
Gonzaga 80, St. Mary's, Calif. 67

### Western Athletic

Tuesday, March 8  
Hawaii 72, San Jose State 48  
Boise State 83, Utah 73

Thursday, March 10  
Idaho St. 60 vs. Hawaii  
Rice vs. Southern Methodist  
Fresno State vs. Louisiana Tech  
Nevada vs. Boise State

Friday, March 11

Semifinals

Saturday, March 12

Championship

## Annual rite of spring: basketball madness

By ARMANDO SALGUERO

The Miami Herald

### Commentary

MIAMI — Championship Week is here, which means 26 conferences from the Northeast to the Southland, from the Western Athletic to the Big East, will decide their tournament champions by Sunday.

That's Selection Sunday to fellow devotees of bracketology and RPI ratings.

By Sunday evening the field for The Dance will be set. Top seeds will be established, and folks from Seattle to Key West, interns to investment lawyers, will begin wading into their office NCAA pools.

Everyone becomes a college basketball expert this time of year, everyone thinks they can spot this year's Cinderella even though they haven't watched a game all season.

That's because these folks who didn't care about college basketball when the season began understand it is March now, and the inevitable is about to happen.

They will soon contract the Madness.

College basketball changes everything in the sports world this week.

It's time when Pacific is not only an ocean but a mid-major team with a real shot to reach the Sweet 16. It's a time when the Davidson Wildcats share the stage with the Kentucky Wildcats.

This week you will root for people you never knew were on the planet. You will watch Coppin State from the M&AC and wish them luck, not because their

three daily dinners. Big Baby took the advice, but watching him dribble-drive to the basket is amazing. He has scored in double figures nine times in the past 10 games, which might be understandable because who the heck is dumb enough to take the charge?

Championship Week and the tournament that follows is about what is right in college athletics.

Neither computers nor polls decide this championship. It will be won by athletes in head-to-head competition. And that gives teams that can win it all no advantage over teams that are happy to be part of it all.

Championship Week also offers a villain. As with great theater, you can satisfy your sensibilities from the unfriendly, pompous, boor gets his comeuppance.

And that's why you should watch Bobby Knight's games.

coach's name is Fang Mitchell, and you have root for a guy who answers to Fang ... But because earlier this season, Mitchell had a tumor removed from his thyroid area yet valiantly continued to point his team toward success.

Championship Week lets us see the fantastic and the freakish.

We will see Louisville guard Taquan Dean, whose game has actually improved since he learned he has mononucleosis.

Off the court, Dean has shown understandable signs of fatigue, which is why teammate and roommate Francisco Garcia says Dean, "is always going to bed early."

During timeouts, coach Rick Pitino jokes, "He's not contagious, but we just stay far away from him anyway."

That hasn't stopped Dean from finding his three-point stroke and leading the Cardinals in that department since learning he had the disease two weeks ago.

Then there's LSU freshman Glen "Big Baby" Davis. He is listed 6 feet 9 and 310 pounds, but everyone knows college programs

— how to stay this delicately — lie. Big Baby looks like he's pushing 350 pounds, which is perhaps the reason former Utah coach Rick Majerus, himself a former college player, suggested Big Baby occasion the use of a couple of his

three daily dinners. Big Baby took the advice, but watching him dribble-drive to the basket is amazing. He has scored in double figures nine times in the past 10 games, which might be understandable because who the heck is dumb enough to take the charge?

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And that's why you should watch Bobby Knight's games.



Louisville's Taquan Dean has led the Cardinals in three-point shooting since he discovered he had mononucleosis two weeks ago.



# Milwaukee sees NCAA berth on its horizon

BY ARNIE STAPLETON

The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — The Wisconsin-Milwaukee Panthers finally got to cut down the nets, thanks to Adrian Tigrert.

The senior forward's free throw with 4.2 seconds left gave the Panthers a 59-58 win over Detroit in the Horizon League championship game Tuesday night.

The Panthers didn't cut down the nets when they won the regular-season title at home, preferring to wait until winning the tournament title and the automatic NCAA bid that goes along with it.

"We saved it because we had a goal in mind," tournament MVP Josh Tucker said. "It feels good to finally cut the nets down. We savored the moment. It means something when you're older and you say, 'We won a conference championship.' But our goal was to get into the [NCAA] tournament."

After reaching the NCAA tournament for the first time in 2003, the Panthers got ahead of themselves last year when they won the regular season and then lost the tournament title game to rival Illinois-Chicago, also at U.S. Cellular Arena.

The Panthers (24-5) looked like they were blowing it again, trailing most of the night and missing 11 of 24 free throws, including the first two by Tigrert with 4.2 seconds remaining.

Milwaukee coach Bruce Pearl called timeout and instructed the rest of his starters to set up on defense while trying to calm Tigrert.

"I told him, 'One's as good as two. We just need one,'" Pearl explained.

It worked.

"I could tell he was confident he'd knock down the next one," Tucker said.

Sure enough, Tigrert stepped up to the line with his red shirt around him and calmly sank his second shot.

"It's nice to redeem myself," Tigrert said. Despite the Panthers' efforts to keep the ball out of his hands, freshman Brandon

Cotton, who had 21 points, brought the ball upcourt, hounded the whole time by Boo Davis. He was off-target on a contested jumper that would have sent the Titans to the NCAA tournament at 15-15.

Instead, the yellow-and-black-clad students stormed the court, something that was denied them a year ago.



Wisconsin-Milwaukee players celebrate as fans rush the court after beating Detroit 59-58 in the Horizon League championship on Tuesday.

Ed McCants' 18 points led the Panthers, who held Detroit scoreless for the final 2½ minutes to avoid losing the tournament title game at home for the second straight season.

Tucker added 15 points and Davis 12 for Milwaukee, which has won 17 of 18 and went 13-1 at home this season with its only loss coming to Detroit, a 78-68 setback Jan. 3. Milwaukee averaged that loss 2½ weeks later with a 61-48 win at Detroit.

The Titans, who went 0-13 this season when falling to score 60 points, were going for their first tournament title since 1999.

Detroit coach Perry Watson was bitter, criticizing the officiating, which he called inconsistent in the closing minutes.

"These things are disgusting. You want your guys to have a fair shot," Watson complained. "It's just tough when you have to look at your guys saying, 'Coach, I was fouled,' and it wasn't called. I guess I question the judgment on some of those."

Cotton's 11 first-half points helped Detroit take a 30-24 lead at the break, and Muhammad Abdul-Rahim's basket to open the second half gave the Titans their big-

gest lead at 32-24. The Panthers responded with three straight three-pointers, two by McCants, the conference's player of the year, to go ahead 33-32. It was their first lead since 2-0.

McCants' two free throws with 10:22 remaining capped the Panthers' 17-4 surge and gave Milwaukee a 41-36 lead. But the Titans came back with nine straight points, taking a 45-41 lead on Cotton's two free throws with 7:11 left.

The Panthers trailed until Tucker sank two free throws with 55 seconds left to tie it at 58.

## Ragin' Cajuns get revenge, bid

BY JAIME ARON

The Associated Press

DENTON, Texas — With strands of net behind their ears and Sun Belt tournament championship shirts over their jerseys, Louisiana-Lafayette's Ragin' Cajuns had good reason to celebrate.

And making the NCAA tournament was only part of it.

Cotton thrilled as they were to make the NCAA field for the second straight year, the Ragin' Cajuns were equally excited — and, in some ways, relieved — to do so at the expense of Denver.

With an 88-69 victory over Denver in the finals of the Sun Belt tournament Tuesday night, Louisiana-Lafayette ended its losing streak earlier this season to the team that also ended its run of three straight division titles.

"We really wanted to face them again," Ragin' Cajuns coach Robert Lee said. "We wanted to come out and make a statement that we were the best team."

Tiras Wade led the way, scoring 21 of his 30 points in the second half when Louisiana-Lafayette (20-10) turned a tie game into a rout. Denver (20-10) got within 70-63 with 5:28 left, but the Ragin' Cajuns closed with an 18-6 run that included six free throws by Wade.

"The first two times we played them, we didn't play to the best of our ability," said Wade, who scored a tournament-record 82 points and was named its most outstanding player. "We believe we have the best five starters in the Sun Belt. If we didn't beat ourselves, we were confident we would get the win."

Although Denver missed a chance to make its first appearance in the NCAA Division I tournament, the Pioneers couldn't be too disappointed. Denver has only been in D-I since 1999 after spending 19 seasons in NAIA and Division II.

"It was an unbelievable year,"

coach Terry Carroll said. "We accomplished things no one thought we would do."

Rodney Billups led Denver with 16 points but had just three assists, half his season average. Yemi Nicholson had 14 points and nine rebounds and Erik Benzel scored 15.

"It was more about what Lafayette did right than about what we did wrong," Carroll said. "They're an experienced, veteran team that's been in this situation before and that's a huge benefit."

Wade's NCAA tournament experiences have been bittersweet. The past two years, he's had to watch his teammates play without being able to join them.

He missed last year's trip because he was sitting out the season after transferring from East Tennessee State. He played for ETSU the previous year when it made the NAAs, but left the squad before the tournament.

"I finally got there. Finally!" Wade said. "It feels better than I thought it would feel."

## Upstaged: At-large berth unlikely for Oral Roberts

KNOCKED, FROM BACK PAGE

In the Mid-Continent final, Scott scored 19 points and Marshall scored 18 for Oakland. The Golden Grizzlies were making their first appearance in the tournament championship. And now, the 8-year-old Division I program will play in the NCAA tournament for the first time.

Caleb Green scored 13 points and Tutt added 12 for the Golden Eagles (25-7), whose hopes for their first NCAA tournament appearance in 21 years were likely dashed. No Mid-Continent team has been an at-large selection to the NCAA tournament, but the Golden Eagles have an 81-63 win against Georgetown on their résumé.

They just missed another impressive win, falling 69-68 at Indiana.

"I don't think we have much of

a chance," Oral Roberts coach Scott Sutton said. "I'll be extremely disappointed if we don't make the NIT. I think we deserve to continue to play."

"I'm just numb," Oral Roberts guard Luke Spencer-Gardner said. "I'm not really feeling all that much. I'm just shocked. This isn't the way it was meant to be."

Oral Roberts used a 9-2 run to take a 44-43 lead, capped when Green took a pass from Tutt, whirled around Oakland's David Ritzema and scored.

After that, the lead changed five times and the teams were tied four times before Spencer-Gardner's two free throws put the Golden Eagles ahead 59-57 with 2:20 to play.

Scott hit one of two free throws to bring Oakland within a point, and Bluff's answer at the other end left an opening for Oakland to win.

# Big hit not perfect vs. Braves

The Associated Press

Randy Johnson's much-anticipated debut with the New York Yankees wasn't filled with awesome fastballs or knee-buckling sliders — and no one seemed to mind.

After all, he was acquired for October. Mark Mulder's second outing for St. Louis was much more in line with that Cardinals expected from their new No. 1 starter.

Johnson worked two innings Tuesday in an 8-2 loss to the Atlanta Braves at Kismet, Fla. He threw 36 pitches, 22 for strikes, and gave up a two-run homer to old nemesis Chipper Jones in an uneven performance.

"It looked like his first spring outing," Jones said. "I don't think anybody in baseball expected him to come out blowing '97. A guy like Randy's got to get his feet under him just like the rest of us. He'll be on his game come Oct. 1."

Johnson said he felt fine physically after being scratched from last week because of a tight left calf. After opening with a strikeout, Johnson allowed a single to Brian Jordan and fell behind 2-0 to Jones before the Braves third baseman drove a 92 mph fastball over the left-field fence.

The Yankees didn't start pursuing Johnson last summer just to add a few derivatives during the regular season. Instead, they pushed to finally complete a drawn-out trade with Arizona in January because they needed an ace in the postseason.

And that's exactly why nobody sounded worried about the 41-year-old Johnson losing his first outing of spring training.

"I know I still have a long way to go to be ready for opening day," Johnson said. "But we'll get there."

Johnson's first outing since being acquired from Oakland in the offseason, Mulder allowed two runs and five hits in three innings of the Cardinals' 9-7 victory over the Washington Nationals at Jupiter, Fla.

"I gave up a couple of runs but they were the only two bad pitches I made," said Mulder, who walked one and struck out three. "I felt much better. My delivery was better and I was in the zone."

It was a big improvement for Mulder, who lasted only one inning in his first spring training appearance against the New York Mets. He needed 44 pitches to get three outs in that one, walking four and giving up a two-run single.

At Bradenton, Fla., NL Rookie of the Year Jason Bay injured his wrist diving for a fly ball in the Pittsburgh Pirates 10-4 loss to the Cincinnati Reds. Bay will miss at least a week with a bone bruise, but should be ready for opening day.

At Tucson, Ariz., Luis Gonzalez made his first start since elbow surgery last August and pinch-hitter Tony Clark hit a three-run double in Arizona's 10-2 win over a split



Atlanta's Chipper Jones is congratulated by teammate Raul Mondesi after a two-run home run off the New York Yankees' Randy Johnson.

squad of Oakland Athletics. Gonzalez had a sacrifice fly the fourth inning, but outing 0-for-2 and is 0-for-7 this spring. He made a throw to home plate from left field in the third inning that was too late to get Dan Johnson.

"My mechanics weren't quite what I've been working on," Gonzalez said. "Just getting the ball in was good enough for me. It's nice to be back out on the field."

**Red Sox 7, Twins (4):** At Fort Myers, Fla., Matt Clement allowed a leadoff homer to Luis Rivas, then retired his final eight batters in his second spring training start since leaving the Chicago Cubs and signing a three-year, \$25.5 million contract with Boston. David Ortiz hit a solo homer and Manny Ramirez added a two-run shot in the sixth for Boston.

**Giants 5, Rangers 1:** At Scottsdale, Ariz., Noah Lowry gave up one hit in three innings to lead San Francisco. Texas' Richard Hidalgo hit a home run in the seventh off Jason Christiansen.

**Blue Jays (6), Phillies 4:** At Dunedin, Fla., Toronto's Dave Bush and Philadelphia's Bryce Harper pitched three innings apiece. Bush allowed one run and three hits, Myers one run on four hits.

**Blue Jays (ss) 2, Twins (ss) 1:** At Fort

Myers, Fla., Gabe Gross, Toronto's first-round pick in 2001, went 2-for-2 with his fourth homer in four days and threw out a runner at home from left field. Kyle Lohse gave up two runs in two innings with two strikeouts for Minnesota.

**Marlins 3, Dodgers 0:** At Vero Beach, Fla., Wilson Alvarez made an impressive bid for a spot in the Los Angeles Dodgers' rotation, pitching two perfect innings. Kazuhisa Ishii, one of his competitors, gave up three earned runs in two innings. In his second start for the Dodgers, Derek Lowe allowed three hits in four innings.

**Mets 7, Orioles 4:** At Port St. Lucie, Fla., Mike Piazza and David Wright had RBI doubles for New York, and Kris Benson allowed three hits and a run in three innings. Orioles second baseman Enrique Wilson went 3-for-4 with an RBI.

**Indians 21, Astros 4:** At Kissimmee, Fla., MVP Sizemore, competing with former AL MVP Juan Gonzalez for a spot in Cleveland's first round of the scheduled start with five RBIs. Jeff Liefer went 3-for-3 with four RBIs and Josh Bard went 3-for-3 and scored four runs for the Indians.

Houston starter Dave Burba allowed six hits and eight runs before being chased with two outs in the bottom of the third.

**Padres 18, Brewers (ss) 5:** At Phoenix, John Knott hit a grand slam, Ryan Klesko had a two-run homer and Mark Loretta had two doubles among his three hits. Victor Santos, vying for a spot in the Brewers' rotation, allowed seven hits and six runs in 11 1/3 innings, 40 percent of 3 innings.

Geoff Jenkins homered twice for the Brewers and new teammate Carlos Lee also homered.

**Athletics (6), Cubs (ss) 4:** At Mesa, Ariz., Carlos Zambrano pitched three scoreless innings for the Cubs. Jose Blanton allowed two hits over three shutout innings for Oakland.

**Cubs (ss) 4, Royals 0:** At Surprise, Ariz., Glendon Rusch gave up three hits in three scoreless innings against his former team. Royals starter Rubeus Hernandez, who made his last season following surgery on his right elbow, allowed one run and four hits in three innings.

**Angels 11, Mariners (ss) 5:** At Tempe, Ariz., Angels starter John Lackey was sidelined by a blister on his right index finger. Top prospect Ervin Santana stepped in and struck out five in two scoreless innings.

**Rookies 6, White Sox 1:** At Tucson, Ariz., Jeff Francis threw three shutout innings and Darren Oliver, his competitor for the No. 5 spot in Colorado's rotation, allowed a run in his three innings. Todd Helton hit his first home run for the Rockies.

**Mariners (ss) 8, Brewers (ss) 4:** At Peoria, Ariz., Jose Lopez hit a bases-loaded triple in the eighth inning and Bengi Gligo had a two-run homer. Francisco Lirio, the Brewers' No. 1 draft pick in 2002, homered.



Barry Bonds might be a DH during spring training as he prepares for the start of the baseball season.

## MLB asked to OK Bonds use as a DH

The Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Barry Bonds expects to be ready for San Francisco's season opener on April 5, and the Giants asked the commissioner's office for permission to use a designated hitter during spring training home games to ease him into the exhibition season.

"I've never missed an opening day," Bonds said Tuesday. "I've missed a lot of games on opening day is great. The main thing down here is to be able to play nine innings consistently every day. That's recovery. When you can play every game in the major leagues for nine innings, that's recovery. Nobody is ever ready to completely play on opening day. It's the Adrenaline rush for opening day."

Bonds had surgery on his right knee on Jan. 31 and when he arrived at spring training said he was unsure whether the knee would recover in time to play the opener. He has yet to play in an exhibition game.

"Whenever he's ready, he'll be in there," Giants manager Felipe Alou said.

The Cincinnati Reds were given permission last weekend to use a DH in five home games starting Thursday so that Ken Griffey Jr. can bat without playing the field. In spring training, the DH usually is used only at the home parks of American League teams.

"After I read that the Reds had approached MLB on this issue and were granted approval, I decided to call MLB myself and let them know that Barry be accorded the same privilege while he recovers from his knee surgery," Giants assistant general manager Ned Colletti said. "What MLB told me was that as long as we offered the visiting team the same opportunity to use a DH during one of our home games and contacted MLB before we did, it would be OK."

"I can't imagine a team saying no to this," Colletti said. "They would have the same opportunity to give a batter at-bats using the DH rule."

## Nomo struggling in bid for job with Devil Rays

BY FRED GOODALL

The Associated Press

LAKELAND, Fla. — Hideo Nomo's bid to make the Tampa Bay Devil Rays' starting rotation isn't going very well.

The 37-year-old right-hander allowed two two-run homers and a wind-blown triple Tuesday in his second spring outing. But manager Lou Piniella isn't drawing any conclusions.

"Spring training is early," he said, "and Nomo's performance stands against the Detroit Tigers." "There's still plenty of time for determinations and plenty of games

left for him to pitch better and better."

Nomo struggled with command of his fast ball in the first inning, giving up homers to Craig Monroe and Brandon Inge and a triple to Vance Wilson before settling down to retire the side in order in the second.

The former NL rookie of the year allowed four hits and walked one. Four other Devil Rays pitchers — Seth McClung, Casey Fossum, Jorge Sosa and Frankie Nunez — held the Tigers to three hits over the last seven innings of a 12-4 victory.

Nomo was not helped by a stiff

breeze blowing out to right field, but said through an interpreter that location of his fast ball was a bigger problem.

"It was windy, but still my pitches were a little too high," he explained.

Nomo is one of nine candidates for five spots in what figures to be a young, mostly inexperienced starting rotation.

Piniella would like at least one veteran to earn a spot, and Nomo and left-hander Denny Neagle, also 37 and trying to come back from injury, will get every opportunity to prove they belong.

Nomo also struggled in his first spring start, giving up two runs

and four hits, including a homer, in two innings of a loss to the Cincinnati Reds.

"I feel good about my physical condition, but I'm getting behind the hitters and the pitches are a little too high," Nomo said.

Piniella called Tuesday's performance "so-so." "It was an easy day to play, not an easy day to pitch," he said. "He got a couple of balls up. And with this wind here, when you get them up in the air they're going to go, and that's exactly what happened."

"But he's healthy and he's working hard. Hopefully the next time he pitches, it will be a better performance."

# Sluggers, Congress and a flight of fancy

The list of ballplayers invited to testify before Congress on the subject of steroids reads like a roster from Rome. Right? Wrong.

If this is a coincidence, so is the continued orbit of the earth around the sun.

Mark McGwire, Jason Giambi, Sammy Sosa, Randy Johnson

Jim Litke



Reform Committee's guest list for May 17. The lawmakers who drew it up were even thoughtful enough to ask Curt Schilling along to pitch.

To keep things light, they also asked MLB commissioner Bud Selig, union head Donald Fehr, executive vice president Sandy Alderson and San Diego general manager Kevin Towers to put in an appearance.

Without further ado, we pre-

## Canseco & Co. invited to gabfest in the nation's capital

view the opening few minutes from that day's broadcast on C-SPAN.

Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., committee chairman: "Gentlemen, let me welcome you on behalf of the House."

Selig: "Excuse me, congressman, isn't this a Hepplewhite mahogany table, circa 1810? I only ask because I'm a student of history, so you probably know, and..."

Davis: "Excuse me, congressman. But we didn't call you down here to talk about history, except as it relates to steroids."

Selig: "Not a student of steroids, too. I'm a very good one, I'm afraid, and not by choice, mind you. Everybody else around me seemed to know about 'juice,' or whatever they call it, so I tried to sit down and learn. Well, I still don't see what bulging muscles and a bad attitude has to do with home runs and acne, but my people assured me it's all related."

"Even so, when I heard that leaked grand jury testimony about someplace called BALCO and the 'clear' and the 'cream,' I thought they were talking about 'Oil of Olay.' Even asked my wife about it..."

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif.: "Mr. Selig, we were inquiring about..."

Selig: "Steroid use. Right. Do you know I once commissioned a study of androstenedione? Yeah, right after some snoopy reporter saw a bottle of it in Mr. McGwire's locker. Even hired some Harvard guys to do it. And you know what they found? You don't, huh? Well frankly, sir, neither do I. It was loaded with technical jargon and really depressing. I put the damned thing in a drawer and forgot about it. If you're really interested, I'll FedEx you a copy. Or you could ask Don for his..."

Here Selig pauses and steals a glance at Fehr: "Unless, of course, he's already turned it into a fleet of paper airplanes."

Fehr: "What the commissioner is trying to say is that there isn't any steroid use by current major leaguers, thanks to the draconian tests we've instituted. All that advance notice had nothing to do with it. And even if there was, let's pretend there wasn't. It wasn't against the rules in place at the time. Bud is a student of history and he'll tell you there's no way to go back in time. At least

not yet. So leave the records alone, too. Period, case closed. Can I be excused?"

Davis: "Excuse me, Mr. Fehr. There appears to be a dissenting opinion. The chair recognizes Mr. Canseco."

Canseco (wearing a silk tank top, sunglasses and rising out of his seat): "You sayin' this body came naturally? You think I hit 462 homers eating chicken at every meal? But enough about singles hitters; let's talk about me."

"I nicknamed myself, 'The Godfather Steroids.' Pretty cool, no? And I personally injected steroids into the butt of at least one guy in this room. And I have it on good authority — somebody's second cousin told me or something like that — that more than a few others followed my instructions and did the same. I can't remember any more details, but they're all my book, which just happens to be on top of The New York Times best seller list. Only \$25.95. In fact, I'll be signing copies later this afternoon at..."

Waxman: "All well and good, Mr. Canseco. But these hearings are for us, not you, to get some badly needed pub. Is there any-

body who can talk about whether the use of steroids was widespread, as most of America suspects, or confined to a handful of sluggers and a few dozen wannabes? Mr. Giambi, can you add anything?"

Giambi: "I'm sorry." Davis: "About what?" Giambi: "Can't say. Sorry." Selig: "Actually, congressman, let me say all of us in baseball were sorry. I mean, what would you have done? We blew up the season in 1994 and everybody was mad at us, and then baseballs start flying all over the place and next thing you know we've got a renaissance on our hands. Hoo-hah!"

"Remember Heather Locklear in that 'Chicks Dig the Long Ball' commercial? I loved her in that. I wasn't sorry one bit about that spot. But where was I? The renaissance. Chicks dig the long ball, everybody is getting a new stadium or angling for one, so who am I to stop the parade? I'll admit, I saw some guys that looked like Charles Atlas, but I figure maybe the horizontal hold on the TV was bad. Even asked my wife..."

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# Ankiel, unable to make pitches, will try hitting them

The Associated Press

JUPITER, Fla. — Rick Ankiel is ending a pitching career derailed by injuries and record wounding and will try to make the St. Louis Cardinals' roster as an outfielder.

Ankiel, 25, had yet to appear in a spring training game as he tried to revive a career interrupted by control problems and reconstructive elbow surgery. He was to have pitched in a "B" game Wednesday, but it was rained out.

Ankiel said he's been thinking of making the switch since he left winter ball in Puerto Rico after feeling a twinge in his elbow. He was impressive his first time throwing to hitters this spring, but the outings since then have been erratic.

"This whole time, the frustration that built up, it seems like it was really eroding my spirit and starting to affect my personality off the field as well," Ankiel said. "It just became apparent that it was time for me to move on and pursue becoming an outfielder. I feel relieved now and I'm happy to move on."

Ankiel is a career 207 hitter (18-for-87) in the majors, with two homers, a double, triple and nine RBIs. He was an occasional DH for the Cardinals' rookie league team in Johnson City, Tenn., in 2001, hitting 10 homers.

"I've always enjoyed playing outfield and I've definitely enjoyed hitting," Ankiel said. "Hopefully, I can pick up as much as I can being around some of these guys and spending more time with them in the cage."



Rick Ankiel has decided to end his injury- and wounding-plagued pitching career with St. Louis and will try to make the club as an outfielder.

Manager Tony La Russa and general manager Walt Jocketty had been aware for a few days that Ankiel was considering giving up pitching. Ankiel said they "understood and wished me luck."

"We are fully supportive of Rick's decision to convert to an everyday outfielder," Jocketty said. "Rick will continue to train with the major league club this spring, and we look forward to seeing his

development as a full-time batter and outfielder."

Pitching coach Dave Duncan said he didn't know of the decision until Wednesday morning. "I've been trying to get him ready to pitch."

Center fielder Jim Edmonds sympathized with Ankiel's decision. "It can't be any more difficult than what he's been going through. He's been through a lot." Ankiel sat out 2002 with a

sprained left elbow and missed most of the 2003 and 2004 seasons after reconstructive elbow surgery.

The left-hander made it to the major leagues at age 19 and was 11-7 with a 3.50 ERA with 194 strikeouts in 175 innings in 2000, but developed record-setting wildness in the playoffs. In the post-season opener against Atlanta, he threw five wild pitches in the first inning, the most by a major league pitcher since 1890, and had nine wild pitches in four innings during the postseason.

He went 1-2 with a 7.13 ERA in six starts for the Cardinals in 2001, walking 25 in 24 innings, then was sent to the minors. He didn't return until last Sept. 7 and made five late-season starts, going 1-0 with a 5.40 ERA in 10 innings.

### Red Sox seek elbow room

BOSTON — The Boston Red Sox are negotiating to buy three small properties near Kenmore Square in a bid to secure space for long-term growth in the neighborhood surrounding Fenway Park.

The properties — a taxi garage, a McDonald's restaurant and the WBZ radio studios — would allow the Red Sox to continue shifting their offices from the cramped, 93-year-old stadium and allow more room for fans. There are no immediate plans for major changes to the properties, vice president Janet Marie Smith said Tuesday.

"We have been looking for anything the area that might help us with our space problems," said Smith, architect of Fenway Park's recent renovations. "It surprised

us it took three years to find a single property."

Team owners have refused to say whether they've made a final decision on staying in Fenway Park, Major League Baseball's oldest and smallest ballpark. But all indications are the Red Sox will stay.

Since buying the team in 2002, the Red owners have added seats and upgraded the stadium. Last year, Boston brought home its first World Series title in 86 years.

### Reds' limited owners selling

CINCINNATI — Three of the Cincinnati Reds' owners confirmed Tuesday that they are trying to sell their limited shares in the club. But at least one owner, Carl Lindner will remain in control of baseball's first professional franchise.

Lindner led an ownership group that bought the ballpark from Marge Schott in 1990 for \$67 million. He and limited partner William Reik Jr. intend to hold their shares and retain control of the team.

"I enjoy my ownership in the Reds and am looking forward to a great 2005 season," Lindner said in a statement.

Local businessman George Strike, the trust for Louise Nipper — the widow of former Reds owner Louis Nipper — and the Gannett Co. plan to sell their shares, which represent 51.5 percent of the team. Under the ownership agreement, Lindner and Reik will have the option of matching any offer for the shares, giving them a chance to acquire a larger portion of the club.

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## SPORTS



Gretzky would use replacements, he just wouldn't like it, Page 27



As Oakland players celebrate, Oral Roberts' Luke Spencer-Gardner reacts to losing in the Mid-Continent Conference championship on Tuesday.

## Oakland upsets top-seeded Oral Roberts, earns Mid-Continent's NCAA berth with losing record

BY JEFF LATZKE  
The Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — All those impossible road trips and murderous nonconference games have finally paid off for Oakland.

After starting the season with seven losses and getting roughed up at Illinois, Missouri, Xavier, Texas A&M and Michigan State, the Golden Grizzlies are going to the NCAA tournament with a 12-18 record.

Pierre Dukes hit a three-pointer with 1.3 seconds left and Oakland (Mich.) upset top-seeded Oral Roberts 61-60 Tuesday night to win the Mid-Continent Conference tournament and an automatic bid to the NCAAs.

"Even though our record might not show it, we are a good team," forward Rawle Marshall said. "We know how to play."

Oakland got its chance to win after Jonathan Bluiett hit one of two free throws to make it 60-58. Marshall found Dukes on the left side, and Dukes was looking to make another pass, but he couldn't find anyone open.



Oakland's Patrick McCloskey blocks a shot by Oral Roberts' Caleb Green during the first half of the Mid-Continent tournament final.

"I wasn't on-balance, but the clock was running down and I couldn't find Rawle or Cortney [Scott], so I had to let it fly,"

Dukes said.

The shot splashed through, and when Ken Tutt couldn't hit a desperation jumper for Oral Roberts,

the Golden Grizzlies celebrated in a huddle on the court.

It's the fourth straight season a team with a losing record has made the NCAA tournament. Each of the previous three — Siena in 2002, North Carolina-Asheville in 2003 and Florida A&M last year — won the "play-in" game, then lost to the No. 1 seed in the first round.

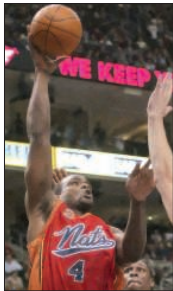
Oakland finished 7-9 in the conference and was the seventh seed in the tournament. The Grizzlies never won more than two games in a row in the regular season, but have a five-game winning streak after three straight tournament victories.

"This season, we've been through a lot of adversity, a lot of tough losses," Marshall said. "It couldn't get no worse for us."

"We just wanted to go out there and play, and that's all we wanted to do. The pressure wasn't on us. It was on them."

Two more teams advanced to the NCAAs. In the Horizon, Wisconsin-Milwaukee beat Detroit 59-58; in the Sun Belt, Louisiana-Lafayette beat Denver 88-69.

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Trade for Webber isn't having effect 76ers were hoping for

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Johnson makes his spring debut for Yankees

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Chiefs bolster defense by signing ex-Steeler Bell

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Armstrong backs Paris bid over New York for 2012 Olympics Page 27